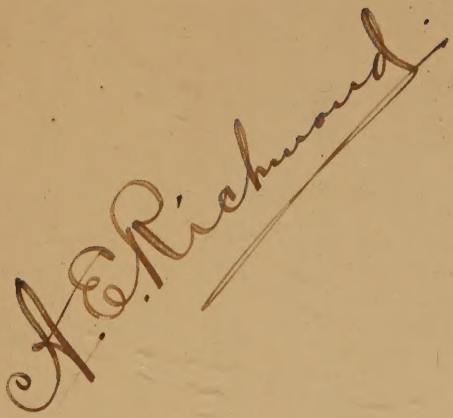
WHITE MAN

GEORGE AGNEW CHAMBERLAIN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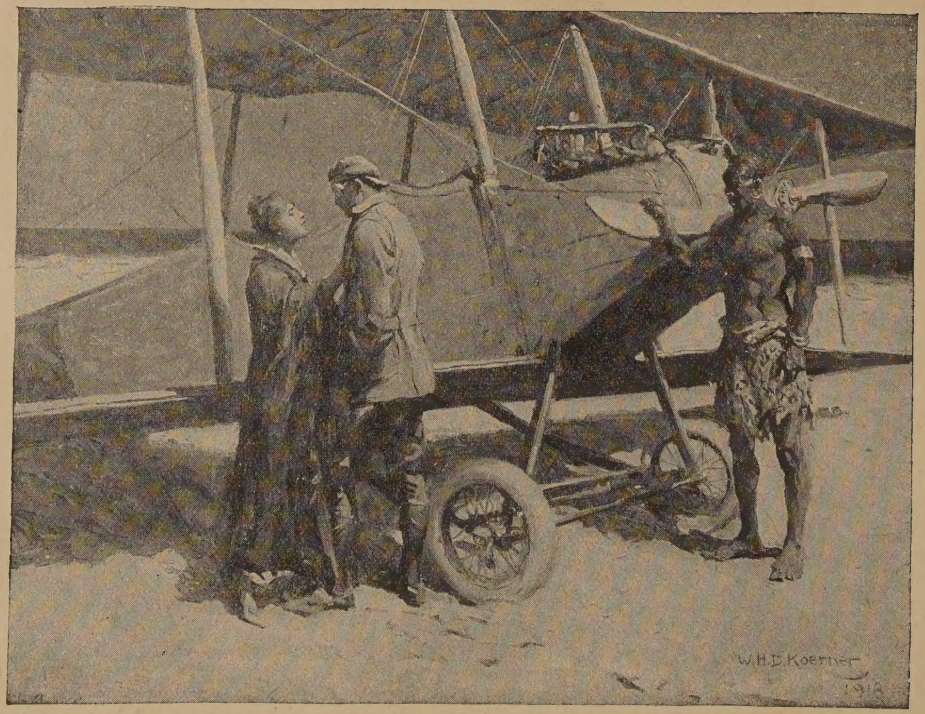

"Please, Mr. Man, take me with you"

WHITE MAN

By

GEORGE AGNEW CHAMBERLAIN

Author of

HOME, THROUGH STAINED GLASS
JOHN BOGARDUS, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

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CHAPTER I

ANDREA PELLOR stood on the edge of the cliff at the back of the Indian Ocean Hotel and gazed out across twenty-five miles of moonlit bay. Beneath her slippered feet was the padded red clay of the terrace; above her head a vast trellis of matted Bougainvillea in full magenta bloom. Except for herself, the terrace was vacant, for the music of a third extra was in full swing and everybody else was dancing. It was not for lack of a partner that she stood alone. She had promised this very extra to four insistent men but had excused herself to one after another of them, "Just for a moment. Just while I powder my nose."

They had all seen her run up the stairs in the main hallway; they had not seen her travel steadily on through the length of the hotel and come down the ladder-like exit into the garden. Why had she done it? That was a question that she herself could not have answered but that did not occur to her as a

matter for solution, so often had a similar impulse snatched her momentarily away from a too crowded world.

The manner of her going presents a slight index as to her composition and an analyst might draw from it even more,—some indication of her precedents, perhaps of her age and at least of her training. A tyro at evasion would have sneaked away like a fox breaking cover and would have had to lock herself in the bathroom for the duration of the chase but Andrea had been too clever for that. By a word and a backward glance she had left her pursuers held like so many cats at a rat-hole, ignorant of the fact that they were the victims of a past-mistress in social subterfuge.

As a matter of record, she was no novice; one Continental and four London seasons stretched back for her into a dismally long past. She was twenty-five years old and to-night she looked her full age as she stood, tired and unmasked, in the white moonlight and gazed wanly, almost desperately, back through all those seasons of set smiles, set speeches, set customs and set sets.

A woman, like a country, is of feminine gender,

but the comparison goes no further for the one is said to be happy only while without a history and the other never rests until she gets one, or what she thinks is one. Andrea had a past but very little history. She was the only daughter of Lord Pellor of Pellor, a land-poor baron who could distribute five titles among his five sons but very little cash. As a result Andrea had lived the life, if life you can call it, of tabulated impoverished English gentlewomen: Everything that the traffic will bear for the men of the family and for the girl just enough frocks at her coming-out to dissemble the bait that clothes the hook that catches the man with millions.

Looking back on her girlhood from twenty-five years old and a perch on a cliff on the moonlit coast of Africa, Andrea saw that she had once been happy. In the days, the brief summer days at Pellor, comprising those seasons before she had come out, when, tattered and torn, pink-cheeked, fleet-footed and healthily hungry she had roamed the woods, waded the streams and lain eye to eye with the sun in the bracken of the ancestral demesne; in those days when frequently though incidentally she had frightened half out of their wits the wardens who guarded

the game against the time of selling the shooting; in those far-off days when she had been a willing sacrifice to her harum-scarum brothers in many a scheme to shock old Aunty Gwen out of a year's growth,—in those days verily she had been happy.

She hadn't realized it then but she saw it now as she looked back upon the girl that she had been. Was it possible that she had already reached that bourne from which the tightening heart *remembers* youth? Oh, no! it couldn't be. To any one else, to her girl friends, twenty-five years were necessarily a quarter of a century, but herself who had seen so much yet lived so little, revolted from that cold measure of time. Remembering girlhood, there came a tender curve to her mouth so different to her practised society smile that it made her look young again,—as young as any bud, heart swelling, lips heavy with dew and breathing the fragrance of untainted youth, that ever swayed, half without, half across, the portal of life.

And yet,—youth dies so quickly; is ground so small in the mill of generations, lives so bitterly long in memory! Two tears welled out of Andrea's eyes and crawled down her cheeks slowly as though

they were accompanying her thoughts along her course to womanhood. Like a mountain stream that leaps the first barrier of its rocky chains and from fronded shadows hurls itself steadily down toward stripped valleys and still lower levels until at last it strikes the wide, unbroken flats and dies with its own music, she saw herself as she had been during her first season, avid, then eager, then only curious, in constant diminuendo.

During that first season offers had come to her; not the measured advances of buyers in the marriage market, for about the brow of such budding maidenhood as had been hers there hangs a guardian halo that blinds the eyes of sane-aged men, but the o'er-leaping onslaughts of youth-maddened hearts.

Names, half-forgotten, came to her mind readily to-night, names of inexpert but impetuous lovers: Jack Cheyne, three times a younger son; Harold F. L. Blunt, fondly known as Hell-for-leather B., disinherited at twenty for an escapade that cost his father twenty thousand pounds; young Lord Turnbill, whose slight and graceful shoulders carried debts that would have done honor to a sovereign state; Donald Bright, of mysterious wealth and

equally mysterious parentage,—all young, each aflame for his appointed time with the Divine Fire but all hopelessly ineligible.

So well had she been drilled as to the *sine qua non* of lineage face to face with matrimony that she accepted the recurring verdict of ineligibility without a protest beyond a sigh thrice repeated, each time from older, wiser and deeper depths. And so had come her second season, her third, her fourth. For each year that her own age increased, that of the aspirants to her hand advanced by decades. Chances came and chances went but not *the* chance. She was like some stock held against a rise by optimistic brokers.

It was in her fifth season that the arbiters of her fate raised the shears of destiny and clicked them. He who fell to her lot was a man of humble origin who had reached the ripe age of fifty-eight without ever having had time to marry. His life, with a difference, had been just as narrow, hidebound and conventional as had hers. The difference was that he had traveled the stereotyped Dick Whittington trail to high finance rather than the social highway. He had started out in Africa with a pack of cheap

jewelry, an open mind and an easy conscience and had emerged after twenty-five years as one of the few Gentiles in the combine that controls the world's diamond output. His wealth was so great that an ultimate peerage was almost a matter of course. But, as usual, an aristocratic marriage had to come first.

The contract was as cold-blooded as any ever perpetrated by a royal house. Allowances, carefully graded, were stipulated to be paid at fixed times to Andrea's parents and to each of her five brothers. She herself, for a change, was not forgotten. She came in for a large and inalienable marriage settlement and was further secured in such details as to where the town residence was to be located as well as to the number and nature of the country places which were to be maintained.

When the document was finally completed it was casually submitted to Andrea for approval. Nobody dreamed that she would doubt for a moment that those in family authority were most able to decide what was best for her and nobody was right. She made no attempt to backwater against the great flood of tacit understanding which carries the well-

born of Britain on its silent tide; she merely skimmed through the typewritten pages of the prenuptial agreement, satisfied herself that a vast sum of money was destined to the upkeep of Pellor, and dreamy-eyed with sudden memories, nodded her adorable head in consent.

All doubtless would have taken its appointed course had not the European War put in its mightily disconcerting finger. Surprising things happened in South Africa. Andrea's affianced sailed on twenty-four hours' notice. The diamond mines closed down, took a short nap, and then suddenly awakened to the fact that America alone was demanding as much of their product as had the whole world before it turned its entire attention to making munitions and paying for them. More than that, certain ladies in Old England who even in the memory of the newborn had been wont to push a barrow and cry their scaly and bivalved wares through the streets of London, dropped sea shells for brass and very soon acquired simultaneously bank rolls and a taste for "the real thing in shiners."

To be brief, the diamond market entered a semi-miraculous stage that required close watching of its

measured sources and Andrea's betrothed found himself harnessed to his job, possibly for the duration of the war. As a result it was decided in family conclave that it was incumbent upon Andrea to take advantage of a providential detail of two of her brothers on the Nyassaland Expeditionary Force and accompany them, surrendering St. George's chapel for a quiet marriage in the Colonies.

It was a blow, but the fact that the entire set of tapered allowances would not start until the sacrificial ceremony had taken place more than offset the loss in pomp. Andrea started for Africa escorted not only by the aforementioned brothers but by old Aunty Gwen, hale and hearty at seventy in spite, or perhaps by reason, of having been frightened out of many years' growth. So here they were, Aunty and she, on the point of parting with the two boys at the last possible port up the coast and whose inhabitants had seized upon the occasion to give a grand ball in the mode of the English who have ever danced, courted and loved best when on the eve of battle.

Andrea drew a long and quivering sigh. To-morrow the boys would be gone. To-morrow Aunty

Gwen and she would depart in state in the private car her affianced, too busy to the last for the soft preliminaries of love, had sent down from the High Veldt. To-morrow—to-morrow would indeed mark the beginning of the end. "The end of what?" cried something within her,—that same something that had so often spurred her to momentary escape. It would mark the end of nothing. Beyond the event she saw herself on the same old treadmill, walking out the endless miles of doing the right thing in the right way, keeping up the same old show of lineage, —lineage *and* money,—leading a little world, never facing the great one.

She felt a great despondency, a terror of the morrow that would bring the end of nothing but that nevertheless would mark the death of part of Andrea Pellor. Then a more startling emotion seized her. The sources of this night's impulses became revealed; she knew now why she ached for freedom and why it had been given her to see her youth so near and yet so completely detached. It was because she had come to the great fork in the fair road of life, because just here she must turn her back on maid's dreams of romance. She realized,

almost with the sharpness of a recoil, that she was on the verge of becoming forever a woman without a history. She looked back and saw that she had never done one *outré* thing; she looked forward and saw that she probably never would; she looked down and—

At her very feet was the coping that edged the almost precipitous cliff. A little to one side, it was broken and from the breach a red clay path descended in long vertiginous switch-back slants, the last of which shot down to the level of the wide sands of the beach, shining white in the reflected light of the full moon. Upon the pale stretch of sand was a far-away blur, a dark, wide-winged blot. She concentrated her unbelieving gaze upon it until she made it out beyond a doubt. It was an aeroplane. Two midget figures moved around it busily.

Andrea watched the midgets dreamily and thought of all the stories she had read about flying-machine elopements. They had invariably bored her for they had always seemed to reduce Romance from filmy tissues to a mechanical basis, very noisy and smelling of grease, gasoline and overalls. But as she stood there, her diaphanous second-best party

dress and her loosened hair stirred by the spice-ladened breezes of an Indian Ocean dawn and her eyes full of the still, fairy light of a tropic moon, the thing drying its vast wings on the distant sands seemed like a giant moth, strayed from some Arabian Night and sent in answer to the cry of childhood's valiant fancy.

Who were those midget dots? Were they men or genii? Whence had they come and whither would they go? Did they talk with tongues or like Brownies, with their toes and eyes? Andrea wondered all these things, suddenly stopped wondering, skipped up the ladder-like stair from the garden to her room, snatched up a warm cloak affair which buttoned in a high collar at her neck and that fell sheer in ever widening folds from her shoulders to her ankles and in less time than it would take to say Jack Robinson a hundred and fifty times she was slipping and sliding down the path of many slants.

She came upon the aeroplane so suddenly that she forgot to be disappointed at its gross materialism. It was very real indeed; so were the men who attended it. One was the tallest, blackest, nakedest native she had yet seen, a mighty statue in unimag-

ined bronze, paganly clothed only at the loins with a spotted pelt. The other was a white man gone brown in the sun. He was neither very young nor old, he carried himself erect with the bearing of a man who is full-grown and knows it and when he moved he gave an exhibition of long, thin muscles under a perfect central control. He wore goggles so that she could not see his eyes, but his mouth seemed to be possessed of a smile that never wavered in spite of the fact that he held a piece of wire between his teeth and was otherwise intent on a number of things.

It was the black man who first sensed Andrea's presence and gave warning to his master in a low, guttural, rolling string of flowing vowels. The white man did not look round; he merely shrugged his shoulders and went on with his job. Andrea watched him in silence until she was convinced that everything that could be done to the machine was about to be accomplished and its proprietor on the verge of flying away and then, emboldened by that unwavering smile, she said in such a voice as children use when pleading for cake, "Please, Mr. Man, take me with you."

She knew a good deal about flying-machines, she knew that they couldn't stay up very long and that if they were worth anything at all they invariably came back to where they started from like well-trained homing pigeons. She had left her door locked and she figured that she would be back long before Aunty Gwen could work herself up to the point of having it broken in. This machine looked like a fairly good one, rather the worse for wear but wasn't that the best possible proof that it had steady and settled habits? When her voice rang across the silence of the false dawn, clear and light as a silver bell giving tongue across snow, the white man started and dropped the wrench he was manipulating. He caught it in mid-air; then let it fall to the ground deliberately and turned to look her over.

She was certainly something to see and to wonder at. Her brown hair was a bit mussed like a sea teased into catspaws by puffs of air. Her eyes of Irish blue danced with a light younger than her face,—a light that attends the eternal wistful child within us,—but beneath their shining gaze were shadows and her cheeks were over-pale. Just to one side of her rounded chin was a bit of black court-

plaster, shameful mask of a tiny sign of too much chocolates and too little exercise. She was slim enough to look tall in spite of that cloak-like affair of dark blue glove-cloth that fell from her shoulders to her ankles in ever widening folds.

Through all his inspection the man's face never changed. He looked her over deliberately, judged deliberately and deliberately let down the little ladder that gave access to the observer's seat. He helped her up without a word, strapped her in and then turned to pour out voluble instructions in dialect to the bronze statue that stood at attention, black eyes fixed on his master's face, red lips repeating like a prompter at a Latin theatre all that his master said.

The white man clambered to the driver's seat, placed before Andrea's, and shouted a word of command. The black man whirled the great propeller; the engine coughed, then sputtered and finally settled down to a steady, vicious, deafening swear. The plane swayed, moved slowly forward, raced fast down the sand and faster until with a billowy lift it rose straight in the eye of the rising sun.

Andrea started to draw a full breath of absolute joy and instead swallowed an entire gale of wind.

It almost burst her open. She had to clench her teeth to conquer it and with her hands made a vizor for her eyes, a wind-mask for her mouth. She wanted to sing, to cry out, "Awake, for morning in the bowl of night . . . !" but she was inarticulate in the face of an element at large and sparring for another chance to rush down her throat. She felt the cheated song racing around in her blood, swelling her heart, informing all her limbs with a new joy, a new life.

She swayed this way and that, looked up and down; then she leaned far out to study the rugged brown face of Mr. Man, the face that always smiled. From where she sat at his shoulder the goggles were not so complete a mask. She looked and her eyes became fixed in a fascinated stare. Two deep lines lay like parentheses from the man's nostrils to the corners of his mouth. They made his mouth look as though it smiled but the man was not smiling. Suddenly she knew that through it all, from the moment he had laid his masked eyes upon her, he had never smiled. Her heart turned cold.

CHAPTER II

UP TO the moment of the sudden chilling of her exultant blood, Andrea had been almost oblivious of the din of the engine. Now she could think of nothing else. The deafening roar that made speech futile was a very real barrier; it imprisoned her, held her like the bars of an iron cage and even beat her remorselessly with its rapid-fire explosions of defying sound. Twice she tried out her voice against it; once in a deep-throated call and again in a shrill scream. It was as though her lips had not parted.

She sank back on her seat, panting and sobbing. She was frightened. Never since the day when as a little child a closet door closed and locked upon her and inexorable darkness had held her for moments that were each an eternity, had she known such terror. The feeling that had come to her then, came to her now,—darkness, a sinking of the heart down, down through an interminable void and, tumbling after it, body, soul, a leg or two and a clutching hand, all come apart in the maelstrom of fear.

The present nightmare did not last for long. Andrea gradually realized that in fact she was quite grown up, not a child at all but a strong and reasonably healthy young woman who had ridden straight to hounds at many a five-barred gate before which men had often paled. What was she frightened about? A *man?* Why, in the vulgar vernacular of across the water, men had been her ailment for years! Her backbone stiffened with a snap, she assumed her natural, erect and square-shouldered carriage and, leaning forward from the hips, laid her hand on the man's arm. Gentle action failing to command his attention, she tugged at him, then shook him. He showed no sign and Andrea's lips gradually set in a thin straight line. Doubling up her fists she started to pummel him into submission.

The onslaught was sudden and it was reasonable to suppose that the man would half jump out of his skin to their mutual peril. She was prepared for that but not for what really transpired. The man merely raised his shoulders at the first blow and paid no heed whatever to the ones that followed in rapid diminuendo, ceasing suddenly when Andrea

painfully realized that such fists as hers were never intended for stone crushers. She sat back filled with wonder and a vague admiration for the construction of the male frame.

In the meantime the aeroplane continued to mount steadily into the chilly morning blue. She looked about her and down. The world was very far away and very small. It looked like something that one might forget and leave behind entirely. She tried in vain to pick out the tiny roof that was sheltering Aunty Gwen through her morning nap. Tears once more came into her eyes and then receded as a new idea came to the assistance of her hard-pressed determination.

She stooped over, took off one dainty satin slipper and after a foolish glance upward to assure herself that the man couldn't possibly look, undid certain fasteners with fingers that could see in the dark and subsequently removed one of her best party, heavy silk, champagne-colored stockings. This done, she sat back with the stocking in her lap and stared long and pensively at the man sitting before her intent on the business of going somewhere at the rate of a hundred miles an hour. That thought

electrified her. A hundred miles an hour meant fifty for every half-hour, and thirty minutes had certainly passed since she had delivered her person into the trap of a kindly smile that was not. She took a long breath, leaned forward, slipped the stocking deftly around the man's neck, tied it in a single slipping knot and pulled.

The results were immediate. The man headed the aeroplane up for a last grab at altitude, started it on a long, straight downward glide and cut off his engine. The blessed stillness that followed was so ineffably sweet that Andrea had to give vent to one great sigh before she spoke and while she was doing that the man calmly drew a hunting knife from his belt and severed the restraining strands of a stocking that only a moment before had been almost worthy of the ankle it had clothed and adorned.

"Oh!" gasped Andrea.

"Is that all you had to say?" asked the man. Into the vast and rushing stillness his calm voice dropped words as cool and hard as pellets of ice.

Andrea choked with rage. She had to swallow a lump in her throat before she could gasp, "I want to go back—at once."

"You asked me to take you with me," said the man in the same calm voice, "and I don't happen to be going back."

"Not going back!" stuttered Andrea, trying valiantly to appear collected. "I *did* ask to c—come, b—but it's every woman's privilege to ch—change her mind."

At her words the man shrank as she had expected him to shrink from her blows. "Oh, ye gods of warmed-over wit and the worn-out phrase!" he groaned.

"You are horrible," said Andrea. "When I first looked at you I saw a smile that was kindly and chivalrous. How could I know that your smile is nothing but camouflage made up of lines of dissipation, and your hideous goggles nothing but a mask for hard eyes? I thought you were a man but you're nothing but a beast, willing to torment a girl who has foolishly put herself in your power."

"My dear girl," said the man, "I don't want to torment you: to give you tit for tat in the worn-out phrase, I wouldn't hurt a hair of your head. You asked me to bring you with me and like a fool I did. Now, like a woman, you are crying because

I didn't bring you and leave you at the same time. Same old story. Women are forever wanting to eat their cake and have it still. There's some more pre-digested language."

"I am not crying," said Andrea, "and my name isn't 'my dear girl' but the Honorable Andrea Pellor." She paused on that weighty announcement.

"Really?" said the man, unmoved. "Brother in the Flying Corps. Nice, humdrum noble family as I remember it."

There was a long silence. Andrea clenched her teeth and her small fists and stared at the man's head as though she would look through it and discover his face from behind. If she could only see his face she could know whether this astonishing indifference to the name of Pellor was a verity or a pose.

"Well?" said the man, reaching to start the engine.

"Don't!" cried Andrea. "Don't start that horrible noise again. I want to talk to you. I want to —Oh, what are you going to do with me?"

There was a pathetic threat of tears in the question that should have melted the rockiest heart but

it failed. "I have no intention of doing anything with you beyond what you asked for, and no interest," said the man quietly, and added apparently as an afterthought, "Personalities have no futures as far as I am concerned."

He reached once more for the throttle. "Stop!" cried Andrea. "I must know what you mean. How can I talk to you with that awful din on?"

"Oh, you'll have lots of time to talk," said the man, and no sooner were the words out of his mouth than they were almost wiped off the slate of memory by the sudden roar of the engine.

Andrea sank back in her seat, crumpled up in body and mind, and cried like a baby. Great big sobs came tumbling up and out of her swelling throat. For the first time in many years she felt that she wanted her mother and at once. The old, familiar ache that comes to us all in moments of misery, the ache that demands something soft to cling to and cry against and marks humanity in sorrow as eternally a babe, dependent and helpless, filled her to overflowing.

"Oh, Mummy! Mummy!" She sobbed like a little child and a moment later just exactly like a little

child she stopped crying, sniffed twice, blinked her eyes dry and presently smiled for no special reason, just as a dawn smiles when its sun breaks out from the dewy clouds of morning. What had happened? Why, a most important thing. She had suddenly realized that no one could hear her crying, not even herself!

Andrea felt lots better. She sat up straight, shielded her eyes for a look around and forgot worry. She laughed at herself. How young,—infantile,—she had been in her break-down and the best of it was that something of that youth was clinging to her still as though she had plunged bodily into the universal fount of babyhood and had come up sparkling. She threw out her arms, opened her mouth a little and swallowed a gulp of cold air. What was it the man had said? Something that stood out, something that somehow was quite "different." "Personalities have no futures." It sounded like the stock-market. She puzzled over the phrase and clung to it, for her mind was quick to grasp the fact that here was its initial hand-hold in the struggle to comprehend the first stranger in all her life who had become immediately important.

"Every person one meets," thought Andrea, following the line of her discovery, "has to be climbed. Some people are insignificant mounds and you just walk over them; others are high cliffs that it takes a long time to climb but that give you fresh and wider views the higher you go. And then there are others," she continued with a vindictive look at the stolid back in front of her, "that are just great round hard boulders."

Her mouth drew down at the corners but she would not succumb again to feeling sorry for herself. Instead, she shielded her eyes once more and took stock of the various handiworks of God. The world was good to look upon that morning. It was twirling by in a strange rotative movement that gave it an illusive appearance. It was like a new toy in the way of panoramas. Things started to come nearer, changed their minds and then swept into the past, lingering long on a steep horizon as though they hesitated before an irrevocable plunge.

Andrea found that by holding back her skirts she could look straight down. She did so off and on for half an hour and the things she saw told her much. Forest and plain, forest and plain swept

under and away in an endless gentle undulation cut twice by long, wandering silver bands. From high in the air those bands were nothing, mere strips of ribbon that a child could step over. But down there? She knew that down below they were mighty rivers, doubtless teeming with hippos, crocodiles and snakes!

Her eyes grew wide at the thought and then narrowed. "It would be great fun to stand on the bank anyway," she was thinking. But to get across? That would be the hitch. She frowned over it. Then, suddenly, curiosity swooped down upon her again and sank its talons deep. "What—*what* does he think he's going to do with me?" In the ache of her whole person to know just that she forgot all other fears and pains.

The engine missed fire,—once, twice. Andrea would scarcely have noticed the fact had it not been for its extraordinary effect on the man. All his pose dropped from him. He became galvanized into nervous life and did several things rapidly with twitching fingers. The engine missed again and he half rose in his seat, craned his neck, turned his face to one side and looked down. In the glimpse

she caught she saw that the lines around his mouth had suddenly deepened incredibly. Not only his hands but his arms and his whole body were quivering as though they were held together only by a deliberate effort of will.

His eyes seemed to fix with a certain relief on a spot, a clearing, far ahead. He settled back tensely and made for it. The engine back-fired with the rippling report of a gatling gun, coughed and stopped. The man gripped the steering-gear tightly and tipped the machine's nose down for a long, reaching volplane. On the backs of his hands Andrea saw little gleaming bulbs of sweat. Swerving to escape the crest of a tree he made a reasonably successful landing, in spite of his agitation. The aeroplane took the ground in the wide beaten circle of a native craal, shot across it and then came to a violent stop with wings buried in the mud-plastered walls of two separate huts.

The shock cast Andrea forward; instinctively she threw her arms around the man's neck. She felt the quivering of his whole body as though it were shaking with an ague. To her astonishment he became for an instant almost pitiable. But only for

an instant; then he nerved himself, climbed out of the machine and helped her down. She gave a long sigh of relief and looked up at him with a half smile on her face. He had taken off his goggles. His eyes were gray and large. They stared at without seeing her and in them was a visible trouble as of some deep and hidden struggle.

CHAPTER III

ANDREA gazed at him, her lips parted in wonder. At last he felt her eyes upon him and a deep flush mounted from his neck and swept upward, lighting the tan of his face with a subdued glow.

"If that happened to me," thought Andrea, "I'd be as red as a field of poppies."

"I—I beg your pardon," stammered the man and started walking up and down with quick strides. Andrea knew instinctively that he was warming up muscles that had been suddenly frozen, steadying shaking knees and shaky heart.

She turned her eyes from him and gazed around to get her first glimpse of the real Africa. From the very start it left her puzzled. She stood at the far side of a great circular court, beaten hard and swept clean as a floor. Within its bounds were two acacia trees, thickly fronded, wide-spreading. Around the court, thirty high-peaked huts stood like sentinels. Behind the huts, other but far smaller structures swarmed,—chicken houses, strongly

withed, granaries on four stilts, pigeon cotes, a stockaded cattle craal and a smaller goat fold.

But what puzzled her were the Africans themselves. A flying-machine had dropped in their midst and discharged two fair, if not exceptional, specimens of a white and dominant race, yet the blacks continued their various occupations and disoccupations apparently unperturbed. There were three women pounding millet in ponderous wooden mortars. They continued to pound. There were other women doing various things,—breaking up fire-wood, sweeping out huts with bunches of brush for brooms, cooking, nursing babes, languidly watching naked children at play. Whatever their occupation, they made no sudden move of variation; even their tongues kept still.

In the shade of one of the vast acacias there was a veritable concourse of men. Their black bodies, clothed only in clouts of game pelts or dirty loincloths, were like a blot of ink against the surrounding glare. They sat for the most part on their heels smoking white, slow-burning cheroots. Two only could be said to be working. They were very old and sat with their backs against the trunk

of the tree, their legs stretched straight out before them and at their sides neat bundles of stripped palm leaves. They were weaving baskets. The men, at least, were not tongue-tied. They seemed to be going through some oral ceremony. First one and then another would take the cheroot from his lips and make a single remark; then the rest would all grunt in unison and with a deep-chested expelling of all the breath in their bodies that gave almost the effect of an explosion.

It annoyed Andrea that her companion seemed to share the stoic calm of the natives in what, to her mind, ought to have been an occasion of much excitement and chatter. It never occurred to her that he was unmoved because he could understand what the men were saying and was merely bored.

At the moment the wheels of the flying-machine had struck the ground the apparently interminable and, to Andrea, meaningless, chant had been started by the native chief, a wizened figure distinguished in dress from his companions only by the ebony-black ring of polished wax that he wore like a halo of darkness on his close-cropped and grizzled head.

This was the liturgy got under way by the chief with a single word and carried on to its logical end by all the others in the gathering under the acacia tree:

"M'sungo!"

"*Huh!*" grunted thirty throats.

"The M'sungo arrives."

"Huh!"

"The M'sungo has come, his ship has landed from the air."

"Huh!"

"It has rushed across the craal."

"Huh!"

"Two huts held out their arms and stopped it."

"Huh!"

"The medicine of the M'sungo is powerful."

"Huh! Huh!"

"Never before has the ship descended within the craal."

"Huh!"

"Never before has it brought with it a white female."

"Huh!"

"The M'sungo's hair is straight like a dog's but

the hair of the white female is like a river that winds beneath the sun."

"Huh!"

It was at this point that Andrea's companion stopped suddenly his rapid striding. For the first time it occurred to her that perhaps he was listening. The chant continued.

"Her eyes are like the midday sky."

"Huh!"

"Her cheeks are like flowers; they have the likeness of much paint."

"Huh!"

"She has no figure."

"Huh!"

"She is all clothes."

"Huh!"

"Expensive to keep."

"Huh!"

"The ship has landed in the craal because she has no legs."

At that the white man threw up his head and clapped his hands once. The chief grunted; silence fell. He spat to one side and spoke deliberately. "Let us arise to greet the master."

They came forward and stood in a long file. The chief took one step in advance, raised his right hand and fastened his gaze on the white man's face. His own seemed to be working in a sudden excitement. *"Bai-ye-te!"* he roared, and there followed, so quickly that it seemed but another syllable of the salutation, a mighty grunt from the depths of thirty chests, "Huh!"

In a moment the whole scene underwent a startling transformation. The file broke and became garrulous. Children stopped their play and ran to join in the rabble. The women dropped their work and crowded into a compact group from which came suddenly a cry that startled Andrea and jerked her around to face it as though she had been yanked by a string.

The cry was high, shrill, continuous. It was produced by rounding the open mouth and working the tongue laterally in a vibration as rapid as that of a serpent's. It was ghastly to watch, incredible in the rapidity of undulation, but once heard, unforgettable. It lasted much longer than Andrea could have held her breath, let alone used it, and ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

"All very interesting," said Andrea turning to her companion, "but why didn't they do it before?"

He looked at her absently. "There is a ceremonial," he said, "a dignity, about the African that is absurd till you've known it for years."

"For years?" repeated Andrea. "It—is this your home?"

He shook his head. "No, Africa—this sort of thing—is never home to a white man. It's a place where he goes to forget his sins. I've been using it—whenever life has given me a chance—as a sun-bath for the soul."

Andrea stared at him, a puzzled frown on her brow. She wondered why his bluntness did not offend her, wondered why his very presence did not hold her to a constant aversion, wondered if it would ever fall to her lot to hear him say a senseless thing or laugh aloud. While she still wondered, he turned from her and began calling out meaningless words. "Shilling! Five! Tin Hat! Bathtub! Overcoat!"

At each name, for names they were, a native stepped forward. They were all bright-faced youngsters, fourteen or fifteen years of age, and their

garb, made up of a clean cloth bound tightly around slim hips and falling to the knees and a red fez with tassel intact, marked them as houseboys,—trusted pickanins who alone had the right to enter the white man's quarters and were collectively his recognized mouthpiece in conveying orders.

"Bathtub!" repeated the white man.

A youngster quickly saluted and stepped out of the line, grinning from ear to ear at being distinguished even for a moment above his fellows.

With a jerk of his head toward Andrea the white man began to talk rapidly. Bathtub's eyes rolled from his face to Andrea's and back again. They widened, they narrowed and, each of the three times the white man said *"Kiboco"* with a peculiar emphasis, they seemed to wince.

Andrea interrupted, "What does '*Kiboco*' mean, please?"

"It means a whip of raw rhino hide," said the man. "An implement that draws blood with a whisper."

Andrea went white; her eyes blazed. "So you whip your servants?" she said with curled lips.

"I have whipped a boy once," answered the man

coolly. "They have never forgotten." He turned to her. "This boy, Bathtub," he continued, "has quite an English vocabulary. He is yours. If he ever fails you I shall thrash him within an inch of his nine lives." He dismissed the boy with a nod.

Bathtub stepped before his mistress, saluted and said in English, "*Kiboco* plenty no good." He grinned the broadest, most friendly grin Andrea had ever seen and without waiting for the smiling answer of her eyes was off like an arrow.

So taken up was Andrea with watching the white man as he issued a rapid fire of orders to his remaining lieutenants that when Bathtub returned, saluted, and led her beneath the lesser of the acacia trees she could not believe her eyes for they showed her a canvas wash-basin on stilts, a clean towel laid over the back of a chair, another chair before a camp table laid with a clean cloth and burdened with two sizzling fried eggs, hot toast, marmalade, a pot of tea and an absurd squat bottle with the stems of wild flowers rammed down its throat.

She took off her cloak and Bathtub promptly hung it to air over a low branch of the tree; then,

while she bathed her face and hands, he stood by with the towel and when she was through with that he drew her chair for her and poured her tea. Children began crowding around. He drove them back and, dragging his toe, marked a wide circle on the ground with the table as center.

Up to that mark and no farther came the children and squatted in a staring, nudging but silent ring. Andrea sat down and gazed over their heads at the craal in general and at the white man in particular, for from him radiated an activity incredible in comparison with the languor that had preceded it. Her eyes fell to the table and she realized two things: she was unusually, marvelously, hungry and the table was set for one.

"Doesn't your master eat?" she asked of Bathtub.

"My master makes ready *caia* for Missis."

"What is *'caia'?*"

Bathtub frowned in an effort to catch up with a word that was on the verge of escaping from his meager vocabulary. "House!" he suddenly exploded and grinned with satisfaction.

Andrea lowered the fork that was half-way to

her mouth. "Makes ready a house—for me?" Her eyes narrowed. "I will not need a house. Tell him."

Bathtub's grin broadened. "Sorry, Missis," he said, "law like that; every Missis one hut, every hut one tax."

Andrea stared at him open-mouthed and then blushed furiously. "I mean that I will not stay here," she explained angrily. "Tell your master I wish to speak with him—at once. Wait a minute. You call him M'sungo. What does that mean?"

"White man," said Bathtub, and departed to call his master.

The white man gave a last order and then obeyed Andrea's summons. As he stepped into the shade of the acacia he took off his hat and mopped his wet brow. "Too bad we can't keep it cool, like the morning," he said.

"I didn't send for you to talk about the weather," said Andrea. "You have been raining orders; now let me give just one. You are to get that machine in shape and take me back now—to-day."

The man's eyes met her gaze steadily but gradually his body began to tremble. He put one hand out to the spare chair as though to steady himself.

"I want you to believe me," he said in a low voice, "when I tell you that what you ask is impossible." His eyes wandered from hers. "I hadn't believed it," he said, half to himself, "I know it now."

He turned as though to leave her. "Wait," cried Andrea. Her heart had sunk within her for she believed him. There was something in the way he spoke that even went beyond persuasion and robbed her of her mainstay—her anger against him. "But—" she stammered and stopped. "Oh, what is to become of me?"

"If I could take you back, I would—now," said the man dully. "When you asked to come with me I knew, of course, that you were unaware of the fact that I was not returning. An impulse drove me to grant your request on the grounds that it is really of very little consequence what happens to any given individual. Impulses pass but decisions are often irretrievable; this was one of them."

"Why?" asked Andrea earnestly, and then repeated more urgently, "Why is it?" Later, in thinking over what he had said she was amazed that the words, as they fell from his lips, had seemed the essence of good sense.

The man's eyes wandered toward the aeroplane but he did not answer her insistent question. "No real harm will come to you," he said instead, "but even so I am sorry. Logic is a treacherous thing," he added absently, "when applied to humanity. I told you that I didn't deal in personalities. I lied. There is something about the warmth of an individual person that melts cold reason."

He left her abruptly and disappeared within a near-by hut. She watched him go with a feeling of partial desertion that gradually was absorbed by a sensation that was new to her,—a consciousness that when this extraordinary man spoke he left his words behind him, not as transients but as permanent guests of the mind. There was something stark about his frankness as though it had been caught in some whirlwind of life and been stripped of conventional clothes in the way of meaningless phrases but for all its nakedness it inspired not fear but a rebellious trust.

CHAPTER IV

ANDREA swallowed a lump in her throat. "I won't—I will not cry," she said aloud. "I shall never cry again. I'm really having a g—good time. I've always been bored and I'm certainly not bored now and only a fool would cry over that." She settled down to her breakfast in earnest, forgot that she detested eggs fried, ate every scrap of the toast, most of the marmalade, and drank three cups of tea. Then she sat back and let her eyes amuse her.

The craal's activity had centered about the newest and smartest of the huts. Women were cleaning it out not only with brush brooms but with moistened rags. Around it many men were working, some digging trenches, others cutting an extra door in its side. Presently still others began to arrive in a seemingly endless procession, bearing posts, stripped of their bark and cut to uniform length, and great bundles of withes and thatch grass.

She watched them work with a wonder at what they were doing that grew vaguer and vaguer until

she drowsed and finally dropped sound asleep in her chair. She awoke two hours later to find the white man standing before her, clean-shaven, clear-eyed, smelling of soap and looking almost dapper in khaki helmet, shirt, breeches and puttees.

"Well, Mr. White Man?" said Andrea.

He smiled a slow smile of relief as though he had been dreading her first words. "Will you come now?" he asked.

She arose, started to follow him and stopped with a gasp. "Why!" she exclaimed, her eyes fastened on the hut that had been the scene of labor. It was transformed. Before it now stood a veranda with a thatched roof. Enclosing the veranda, the hut and a tiny garden at its back, was a mighty stockade, each post of which was sharpened to a needle point. From the extra door ran a covered way as strongly built as the stockade and which connected the hut with its neighbor,—that into which the white man had disappeared.

"Will you come?" repeated the man.

Andrea followed him only to stop again when she reached the veranda. It was carpeted with a long grass mat of vivid colors and on the mat

stood chairs and a table. On the table was a hand-sewing-machine and from corner-to-corner-post swung a hammock. She had to stoop very low to enter the hut itself and once within had to wait a long time for her sun-filled eyes to accustom themselves to the kindly gloom. The man grew impatient and struck a match. By its light Andrea saw a vision of comfort. The room was circular and unceiled so that one could look up and up into the very depths of its tapering peak. From that height dangled a wire and on its end hung a lantern. The man lit it and showed her how it could be carried to any desired point on the circumference of the room and hooked there.

Even with the lantern lit, the room was still dimly illumined but the soft light was enough to disclose that the mud floor had been first covered with grass mats and then with the warm pelts of a dozen different kinds of game. On one side stood a cot already made up; beside it, a small camp chair. On the other side was a long hammock-chair, looking almost as comfortable as it really was, and close to it stood a carved tabouret piled high with books. Over a small table hung a foolish little mirror. The

walls were wainscotted with a woven mat of golden reeds. The place smelled clean, was clean.

Andrea had come into the room obsessed by a single idea and that was to determine the why and wherefore of the covered passage leading to the next hut. She failed to discover its entrance until her companion drew her attention to a door, wainscotted like the walls but crossed by a sturdy bar pivoted at one end, the other sinking into a deep socket.

"It occurred to me," said the man, "that perhaps you would be afraid at night unless you were sure of help. Listen." He raised the bar and as he did so the hidden door flew open and a gong sounded in the next hut. "The bar can not be lifted from my side, of course," he added.

Then he led her out through the veranda into her private garden and pointed to a quite new and tiny hut. "Your bath and washroom," he said. "You must have no water in the hut you live in, not only because its floor is of mud but principally on account of the mosquitoes."

"Live?" said Andrea. "My dear White Man, you are mad. I'm not going to live here no matter

how horribly I'm tempted by all this thoughtfulness of yours and—care."

He looked questioningly at her face. "Will you dine with me," he ventured, "at half past five? It's the best hour on account of daylight and only two meals a day. Will you? After that we'll talk it out."

Andrea nodded and dismissed him with, "Till half after five, then."

But as she sat down in the comfortable hammock-chair and reached for a book she realized that she was by no means as calm as her words had indicated. She tossed the book aside before she had read its title, drew her feet up, hugged her knees and with chin resting on them, stared before her.

Things had moved so fast through the day that she had had no time to mark more than their general course. Now she settled down to a deliberate survey. She went back in her mind to Aunty Gwen, to her brothers and to the public at large as represented by the colony dance. She imagined their consternation at her disappearance, visualized the efforts that even at this moment were being made to trace her and felt the full force of their inevitable futility.

The aeroplane had made its start at low water; the rising tide would have rapidly obliterated its tracks. The searchers would have nothing—nothing to go on. There was only one chance as far as she knew and that was a slim one. In the general excitement the native whom the white man had left behind might chatter his way into sufficient prominence to get himself called as a witness. But she set small hope on such a solution for the last few hours had taught her that the author of all her troubles was more than White Man to those under him,—he was master.

Then her thoughts turned to the man she was to have married. She smiled ruefully at the tense she used to herself, "was to have married." Of course and whatever happened from now on, that—deal—was off. She puckered her brow, puzzled that such a conclusion brought no great shock with it. Last of all, she thought of herself. What was the meaning of this day to Andrea Pellor, to that girl whom she had curiously watched, studied and dreamed over during very nearly a quarter of a century? Unconsciously she faced the problem from the standpoint into which she had been bred alone,—

measured it by the cold rule of convention and society usage.

Such a disappearance— One could have "got away" with it possibly in New York, probably in Paris, almost certainly in London, but not in Africa where the very isolation of the fact would throw it into bold relief. A girl innocently and by *force majeure* away overnight in London and a needle in a haystack were just about one and the same thing in the long run of a picked string of lies among friends. But for the Honorable Andrea Pellor to vanish overnight into the heart of the Dark Continent! That would certainly call the combined searchlight of the press of the world! It was Copy with a big C.

"I'm done for," said Andrea to herself. "Yesterday I was a pearl of great price in the marriage market and now everything in the way of cash that offers will come from the music-halls! Your last day, Pellor," she added aloud, giving a deep significance to the use of the old family name alone. Her lips curled and her eyes hardened rebelliously as she added a final murmur, "But it's been a hummer!"

"*Scoff* ready, Missis."

She jumped erect with a startled cry.

"Plenty hungry, eh?" said Bathtub with his usual grin of pride at his powers of deduction.

"Tell your master that I shall come in ten minutes," she said, watched him go and closed the door after him. Then she turned and hurried to the little mirror on the wall. She flushed with anger as she looked at herself. The excitement coupled with the heat had made her forget her inappropriate garb. She took down the mirror and held it at arm's length, studying herself from varying angles. "How absurd, how *asinine* you look," she snapped at her reflection.

She rehung the looking-glass and looked around for implements of toilet. On the little table lay a comb and a single military brush, looking lonely without its mate. There were also a tin of powder, the common sprinkler variety that men use, a fresh bottle of dental lotion and a sealed box, proclaiming itself in loud type the container of the only perfect tooth-brush.

"Not so bad," reflected Andrea, and went to work to make the best of what was already one of God's

choicest creations. But when she had finished, the wonderful result only angered her. The incongruity of sitting down thus garbed to an open-air camp dinner at half past five in the afternoon and face to face with a man in appropriate khaki, outraged her very accurate judgment as to what was fitting. Suddenly she remembered her cloak. She rushed to the door and called for Bathtub. He came on the run, received her orders and a moment later fetched the all-concealing garment, still warm from its sun-bath. Andrea put it on, her bare shoulders shrinking from its hot touch.

Beneath the acacia gleamed the white table set for two. Near it sat the man, nursing patience with a cigarette as is the way of the waiting male. He arose as Andrea drew near and threw his cigarette away. He was clothed in the full dress of the tropics,—white mess-jacket, black tie, white waistcoat, black trousers, silk hose and pumps. Clean-shaven, hair well brushed, he had dotted the *i's* and crossed the *t's* of etiquette and stood for six feet of the best brand of unconscious gentleman.

Andrea stopped several paces away and gazed at

him. Her eyes filled suddenly with tears and her heart swelled in the quick answer of the generous to the thoughtful. She drew near and said in a voice that trembled slightly, "You are considerate in all—little things."

She raised both hands to her throat, unhooked her cloak and let it slip from her shoulders. Bathtub rescued it before it reached the ground but she was unconscious of that,—she was watching the man standing before her, just beyond the small table. For an instant his eyes were those of a man of her own worn world. They swept over her as though they took the measure of her loveliness for the first time. They traveled with a flashing gaze from her soft hair to her flushed cheeks, down over her bare neck and into the faery meshes of her filmy frock and there they stopped with a jerk as though even in that moment, he remembered that very short skirts and a truncated silk stocking might leave a serious gap in the all too frail defences of modern modesty.

Then they came back in one swift, upward sweep and met her own gaze, squarely, steadily. She drew

a deep breath. Something sustaining had come into the white man's gray-blue eyes, something you could lean upon. He was suddenly not of her old world.

"I am afraid the soup is a little cold," he said as he stepped around to draw her chair for her.

CHAPTER V

THE dinner was good beyond the *cachet* of mere gross appetite and it was served with a rapidity and smoothness that would have done credit to the oldest of the Pellor butlers.

"Your servants are well trained," said Andrea, breaking a long silence from a sense of social duty.

"Each has little to do," said the man. "He must do it well." He raised his eyes from his plate and added, as though he made an effort to meet her advance half-way. "That, incidentally, is the secret of getting satisfactory work out of an African."

"Is it?" said Andrea absently. "I've always heard they were a shiftless lot and that a white man could do the work of ten niggers."

"So he can, ordinarily," answered the man, almost as absently, "but there are times when ten 'boys,' ten picked 'boys'—" He stopped as if he were lost in some far reminiscence; then his mind took a sharp turn back. "By the way, we don't say 'niggers' in Africa. We call them just 'boys' whatever their age."

"I know," said Andrea. "I'm sorry."

A silence fell to the end of the meal which coincided with the sudden end of the tropic day. The sun, softened to a benign, rayless disk of yellow cheese, took one long, slanting look at them and dropped from view with almost comic precipitance.

The man spoke to the servants for the first time. They cleared the table, set it again with glasses and liqueurs, cigars, cigarettes and coffee, and moved it slightly to one side. Then, from the near-by hut, they brought out two cushioned wicker chairs, homemade but comfortable. Andrea sank into hers with a peculiar feeling of well-being mixed with suspense. The man sat down opposite her, the table within easy reach of both but not between them. Something swayed with a jerk above their heads. Andrea, startled, looked up just in time to see an enormous white disk unroll from its edges, letting fall in a circle around them a snowy mesh of bobbinet.

They, and all they needed for comfort, became enclosed in an insect-proof cage that swayed softly to the evening stir of air. The servants weighted down its edges with flat stones and then lit two

acetylene lamps that stood outside on stands placed at right angles to the couple within the net so that the eyes of both were spared the glare.

The man poured coffee and liqueurs, lit Andrea's cigarette, chose a cigar for himself and sat down. During the coffee they eyed each other in silence, taking each other's measure. "It is too bad," he said finally, "that we can't take this hour for itself alone and drink together a cup of peace and stillness and comfort."

His words were half a question and it was so that Andrea understood them. She laid aside her liqueur glass and deliberately looked at everything except the male source of her trouble. A hasty round moon was just climbing into the sky, red in the face, like an angry dame in pursuit of a fleeing lord, bent on a night out. Its light, together with that of the lamps and of the fires which gleamed with an almost garnet glow before each hut, made of the whole craal a shadow picture such as, once seen, lives in the eye forever.

She drew a deep sigh, shrugged her bare shoulders and turned squarely to her companion. "It is too bad," she said, repeating his words with bitter

emphasis, "that I can't forget that on this night I lose everything that matters,—too bad I can't brush catastrophe and ruin aside for the sake of a fool moon and a cigarette."

As she spoke, the man braced himself. "Everything that matters," he repeated. "Ruin! What have you lost that matters? Wherein have you been ruined?"

The girl stared at him, open-eyed. "You are not joking," she stated. "You know who I am, what I stand for in my world and how that world will make a chasm that I can never recross after this night and you can sit there and say it doesn't matter and ask where's the ruin?"

The man looked away from her tense face. "The things that matter," he said quietly, "are health,—first of body and then of soul,—honor that can stand alone, and the flame of an inner lamp. There is nothing else that really counts and you've lost none of these. As for ruin—" He turned his eyes back to her and in them was a gleam of quizzical challenge. "Shall I define ruin for you?"

"Please do," said Andrea, unsmiling.

"Ruin," said the man, "is burial. Whether it's

Pompeii or an entire civilization lying under stratas of a ten thousand years' stride of time—or an individual rotting under the sod of conventions, it's all one and the same thing. Routine is a tomb and when you get so deep in its foul air that you can't keep burning the flame of that inner lamp I mentioned, why you're dead to every intent and every purpose. That, Andrea Pellor, is ruin."

He used her name without prefix but without familiarity; simply as a corollary to his stark frankness. She realized this almost subconsciously. Her thoughts lingered on the substance of what he had said but when she spoke she proved herself a woman. "Speaking of names, what is yours?" she asked.

"Mine? My name?" said the man, startled out of his rôle. He stared absently through and beyond her. "Why, I haven't any—now. Not that amounts to anything." His eyes came back to her. "Call me Mr. White Man as you have begun,—just White Man when you feel genial, if you ever do."

"Well, *Mr.* White Man," said Andrea, with emphasis, "what you said about ruin didn't pass quite over my head. I believe you spoke with genuine sincerity and that, as you doubtless remember, is

conversational bad taste. Somehow it didn't bore me, but do you really think that women are persuaded by words?"

The man dropped his eyes. "No," he said listlessly. "I don't. I know but I had forgotten that women are persuaded by love alone."

"What!" cried Andrea.

"Women," said the man, "know no conversion except through love."

"I have no interest whatever in your abstractions," said Andrea angrily. "I don't care *what* you think on any subject under the sun. What have generalities got to do with me to-night? At this moment there is only one thing that concerns me—only one." She turned from him, threw her bare arms across the table and dropped her face against them. "What is to become of me? What do I care about women? I care about myself, about Andrea Pellor."

"I am glad that you do," said the man, and added grimly, "If you cry, if you even start to cry, I shall go to bed."

Andrea threw back her head and turned her face toward him. "I am not crying," she said quietly, "and I will not."

Her anger had died and in its place had come into her eyes something terribly potent, the unforgettable look of a hunted thing at bay. The man knew that look, knew to his cost that no familiarity with it could ever breed contempt or dull the sudden shame in the heart of the hunter. His hands grew suddenly cold and clammy.

"I want to ask you," continued Andrea, "to implore you, to take me back. If not to-night, then to-morrow. Flying or on foot, if only we could start *now*." Her face broke into the wistful smile of pleading childhood,—the heartrending smile of woman on her knees. "I will say that it has all been my fault, that you did nothing beyond what I asked you to do in bringing me with you, if only—if only you will take me back. Will you?"

The man clenched his teeth. "I would if I could. I've told you that already," he said almost in a whisper. Then his voice grew clearer and colder. "It would take eight days by any means at my disposal—eight days there and eight days back. I can't afford it and nothing would be saved or gained as far as you are concerned. It would only entail a loss I have no right to give."

His mood hardened Andrea's. "You mean that when it comes to choosing between my personal loss and yours, you see no reason to hesitate."

The man flushed under his tan and his eyes gleamed as though her words had given them new life. "Mine would not be a personal loss," he said. "I am not a loafer nor am I here for my pleasure. You will understand, in time, more than I can tell you."

"I see," said Andrea. "My life against the interests of your employer. Are you a foreman?"

He shrugged his shoulders and ignored the question. "Your life?" he said. "What are you worth, after all, coming down to carpets and tacks? The best specimen of woman in this camp represents an investment on the part of the husband of two pounds ten shillings,—say three pounds at the most. Every girl child she bears and rears brings him a hundred per cent. return and in addition she keeps house, cooks, chops wood, totes water and tills his fields."

Again Andrea jerked him out of his rôle with her inconsequence. "What does tote mean?" she asked icily.

"To tote means to carry, fetch, lug, bear,—"

"Thank you," she interrupted. "By the way, did you mean to measure me against that three-pound standard?"

"I did," said the man.

She threw out her arms in a gesture of disclosure and laughed. "To think," she said, "that it's only a few weeks since I was knocked down to the highest bidder at twenty thousand a year!"

"Not you," said the man quickly. "If you yourself could be bought with money, who knows? Possibly you would be cheap at the price for a woman is like a mine,—by the surface indications one can never tell to what depths the vein of gold may run. He wasn't buying you. You never even thought it. I happen to know him, perhaps better than you do, and I can assure you that the tinsel and the pomp he was bargaining for, innocent enough in themselves, would have become despicable and tainted by his possession."

He was silent for a moment; then, just as Andrea's lips were opening to a remark, he added, "I'm glad you brought him to my mind. The thought of him has freed me from my regret. You're here, I'm glad you are, and you shall stay. The

only question is whether you are going to sulk or whether you will smile and accept the cure of the philosophy of contrasts."

"That's a new one," said Andrea.

"Not at all," replied the man. "I'm only harping back to the definition of ruin that you thought didn't quite pass over your head. The philosophy of contrasts is based on the idea that a rut and death are one and the same thing. Life is steeper than it used to be; one has to climb it by switchbacks or go under."

"You've missed your vocation, White Man," said Andrea flippantly. "You should apply for the succession to Father Vaughan's mantle, get your pulpit and turn missionary to society."

"I've got the face of the earth for a pulpit," said the man easily, "and I couldn't do with less."

"I had suspected that there was something colossal about you," replied Andrea quickly, "and now I know it. It is your impertinent self-sufficiency—"

"You misunderstood me," interrupted the man, himself unmoved. "What I meant by that flamboyant statement was that no philosophy has ever lived except through example and one can't fulfill the

creed of contrasts with less than the whole world for a playground."

"Playground?" repeated Andrea. "You don't mean it's a cheerful philosophy? You—why, you never laugh!"

"Don't I?" said the man with a kindlier smile than she had yet seen; then his face grew grave again. "Its backbone is content without hilarity."

"And has it never failed?"

His eyes wandered to the half-wrecked aeroplane. "Yes, it has failed—once."

"A case of 'physician cure'—" began Andrea and stopped. His eyes had swerved back to hers and the naked look of regret in them frightened her. "Well," she continued, glancing away hastily, "do you really want to—to convert me?"

He started in his chair and if he had been thinking of his personal troubles, promptly forgot them. Had it been merely a chance shot, he speculated, or was this young lady possessed of that rarest of virtues, a quirk of mischief in the face of adversity? "Women know no conversion except through love," were the exact words he had used. He recalled them perfectly and watching in silence a telltale flush rise

from her bare neck into her hot cheeks he perceived that she also remembered.

"Oh!" cried Andrea, "I think you are horrible."

"I haven't said anything," remonstrated the man.

"That's why," snapped Andrea. "You *could* have said something. You keep quiet and give a beastly significance—significance—"

He helped her out. "To a little joke," he finished and added quite gravely: "Be sure I shall do all in my power not to convert you."

CHAPTER VI

THE heat of the day had quite passed. Andrea felt of her arms. They were soft and cool. She laid them on the table and studied them as though she never had noticed them before. She was thinking that all her fright had died away. She was alone with a man, alone by over a hundred miles and yet,—never had she felt less lonely, more secure. She tapped the table and her eyes narrowed as if they were measuring. Presently she threw up her head, turned to her companion with a smile and said, "I've decided not to sulk, White Man. Tell me what your philosophy will do for me if I give it a try-out."

The man drew a long breath of relief, examined the ash of his cigar and flicked it off. "First of all," he began, "it will lift a fever from you, the fever of hastening from one little thing to another. That's the malady of society, the dread of an idle and empty hour in which the mind must feed upon itself or starve. Be fair with me. Look back and tell me if your memories aren't all stock varieties; I

mean don't they all fall into set and dry classifications?"

"I understand," said Andrea. "You mean they are all chucked into about six bins like staples at a grocery."

He gave her a look of undisguised admiration. "I mean exactly that. My philosophy will give you the secret of the happy idle hour. Never again can a city or a great house quite smother you for it will be in your power to sit spell-bound, your eyes fixed ten thousand miles away on a girdle of high-peaked huts, on black women pounding millet, pot-bellied pickanins at play, a blotch of bronze statues taking an hour off from pose and chanting the news of the hour."

"And an aeroplane," added Andrea, "trying to push two surprised huts out of the way."

The man made an impatient gesture. "There you go," he exclaimed, "pouncing, claws out, on the one personal element!"

"Why!" cried Andrea, eyes innocently wide. "What's personal about an aeroplane?"

He looked at her grimly and ignored the trap. "It will give you things to think about," he con-

tinued, "and when you have them you'll no longer be afraid of thought in itself and when you are freed of that fear you will find that sincerity ceases to be conversational bad taste. It becomes, rather, a weapon, the only probe that can pierce the armor of individuals, for, of course, you know that every personality wears a shell, thick or thin, close-jointed or loose."

"I know," exclaimed Andrea eagerly. "I was thinking something like that when we were flying, only different. I was thinking that every person you meet you have to climb. Some are just mounds and you walk over them, some are cliffs that give you a broader outlook the higher you go and some are just—just great round boulders with no hand- or foot-hold."

"That's good," said the man, "but you're right. It's different." His eyes glinted amusedly. "I won't say 'there you go' again."

"Oh!" cried Andrea, disappointed. "What do you mean? Do you think I'm *always* looking for the personal."

"You always will until you're unsexed," he replied.

"That's a masculine shibboleth," stated Andrea, "a cliché of the male mind that's worn out of meaning like a word you repeat over and over till it's just rot."

"Well," answered the man apparently ignoring her attack, "let's be personal. Why not? What am I,—mound, cliff or boulder?"

"When I thought it out you were a boulder."

"And now?"

Andrea avoided his eyes. "You're not a mound."

"Am I still a boulder?" he insisted.

She turned her eyes and looked him up and down fleetingly. "What else will it do for me?" she asked.

"What else?" he repeated. "Ah, yes. The philosophy, eh? It will make you gloriously independent, —reduce you to the three elements of content,— health, honor and an inner flame."

"Let's begin with the inner flame," she suggested. "It sounds mystic."

"But it isn't," he replied. "It's the most practical thing in the world. It has not only the attributes of a will-o'-the wisp but all the virtues of a kitchen mop and it has more names than an archduke. Ambition, illusion, youth, are a few of its

commoner appellations but the one that comes nearest to imprisoning it in a phrase is, breath of life."

Andrea studied him almost impatiently; inwardly she was rebelling tremendously at finding herself so continually interested by one who was even at the moment calmly doing her a great wrong. If he had spoken as didactically about his precious philosophy as what he said would have read, she would have found herself at once; but he hadn't. In that point more than in any other lay the charm—charm? Well, call it charm, anyway, of this unusual male. He talked with little pauses, not from hesitancy but as though his mind were browsing aloud in pleasant pastures.

Having thought the matter out with a view to hearing him browse some more she said, "Can't you bring it a little nearer?"

"I'll try," he answered after a pause. "Breath of life is that quality which holds back a man from marrying for money and urges another to the desertion of wife and children because he's bored, that makes a preacher leap from the pricking pinnacle of dogma to the heart of the Red Light district and his own destruction, that leads the king-bull of the

herd to impatient paths of lonely meditation. In short, it's the perpetual vigilance of self at the apparent risk of the soul."

"Sort of sublimated egoism," remarked Andrea.

"Selfishness, you mean?" He shook his head. "It's not even on that plane; it's so much over it that selfishness as a quality is merely one of the pebbles on the beach below it that the sea has been grinding down to uniform characteristics for a hundred years. No, it's almost an opposite; it's the defence of the individual against egoism, socialism and every other ism in the calendar of immutable rules of living. Alive, it's a flame; dead, it doesn't even leave a corpse."

Andrea yawned. "Now honor," she said.

"Won't you talk a little?" said the man. "Defining is a great game and I don't want to hog all the fun. Speak for your class. What's honor?"

Andrea thought for a minute; then she smiled. "With women, it's keeping anywhere this side of the Rubicon." She paused.

"And with men?" he urged.

"With men it's the art of not getting caught."

"Capital!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," she murmured. "I thought you would like those answers." He stared at her but she kept her face innocent of malice. "Now tell me what honor really is."

"I believe you could have told me," he answered, "except for the fact that your exceptionally good taste bars sincerity. Honor, to my mind, is the pillar without props upon which individual life is twined. It's what is left of morality when you're sure no one is looking."

Andrea stifled another yawn. "Some of the things you say," she gasped, "are almost clever enough for a book to read in bed."

"I beg your pardon. I'm sorry," said the man and clapped his hands loudly. A bundle under the tree, wrapped up head and all in a blanket, resolved itself into Bathtub rubbing sleep out of his eyes; arose, seized a rope on a pulley and hauled. The circular mosquito net rolled up from about the table.

"Will you go to your room and tell me if you have everything?" asked the man. "Everything necessary, I mean."

Andrea reached for a fresh cigarette. "Don't be absurd," she said. "I'm not going to bed for hours."

She glanced at him with a sort of diffident look, as though she were about to give away a secret. "When I yawn, always keep on talking. It means I'm—I'm *tirée*. *You* know."

"Damn your society tricks," remarked the man. "I'm going." He arose and turned his back on her.

Before he had taken three strides her voice came to him and in it was a new quality, a sure maturity. "Go if you like," she said evenly, "but I shall sit here until you come back."

He turned at once, a flush in his cheeks. "Forgive me," he said simply, struck a match and held it for her.

"Now health," said Andrea. "Don't you think I'm reasonably healthy already?"

"No," said the man, "until you've wolfed a whole meal and grabbed chicken with your fingers, you don't really know what bodily health means. God has given you such beauty of skin that you owe it to every eye that caresses itself with a sight of you to keep it without blemish and yet you sit there and ask me if you're not reasonably healthy with a spot on your cheek."

"Oh!" cried the girl. A sea of sudden color

swirled about her neck, up into her face and down over one-half the length of her bare arms. She threw up a hand to her cheek and pressed it there. Her eyes were aflame. "If ever I can hurt you—" she said slowly, "if—ever—I—can—"

The man looked surprised; then contrite and finally merely grave.

"Let me assure you," he said, "that you will inevitably have it in your power."

"I'll not forget when that day comes," she said and arose. With her hand still pressed to her face, she hurried from him across the craal into her room and slammed and barred the door behind her. She went straight to the mirror and took her hand away. Such a trifle that tiny spot had seemed last night, the night of a party,—just an excuse for a beauty patch of black plaster,—and to-night it was immeasurably ugly!

With bed so near she could not stop to cry just yet. She went about her preparation deliberately, subconsciously secure in the thought that she could soon soak her pillow in aching comfort. She took off her frock and performed all the rites of toilet even to brushing and plaiting her hair. Throughout

her maneuvering she was aware of a presence in the room, inanimate but terrifyingly personal. However she turned, it still lurked in the corner of her eye, accused her of dallying and almost said aloud, "Eventually! why not now?" Finally she slipped off the rest of her dainty clothes and with eyes screwed tight shut, groped for the presence, seized it and put it on in two parts.

"Oh!" she gasped in a rage, "that I should have to wear that beast's silk pajamas!" She put out the light, hurled herself at the cot, curled up like a kitten, drew the sheet over her head, cuddled into the pillow and sobbed, "Poor Andrea! Poor Andrea Pel—Pe—"

Brutal, elemental sleep had choked the words in her throat.

CHAPTER VII

THERE is no telling when Andrea would have awaked had it not been for Bathtub who thundered on her door at the scandalously late hour in that clime of eight in the morning.

"Bath ready, Missis! Bath ready, Missis!" he was chanting monotonously when she swam up to consciousness from depths of childlike slumber and to the realization that she had been half hearing his cry for at least an hour. She arose, put on her cloak, opened the door and rubbed her eyes at the shock of a noonday glare.

The boy grinned from ear to ear. "Bath ready!" he exclaimed with a happy finality and bearing towels and soap led her to the newly-constructed little hut in the yard. He placed the paraphernalia on a chair set close to a collapsible canvas tub and from a neighboring smoldering fire fetched a big tin of water.

"Hot water!" cried Andrea. "Why, I'm boiling myself. Bring me cold water."

"Cold water no good," affirmed Bathtub as he emptied the tin.

"But I *wish* cold water," said Andrea.

"Cold water plenty no good for white Missis," reaffirmed Bathtub and withdrew, carefully closing the door behind him.

Andrea enjoyed the bath and learned in ten minutes the soundness of the tropical rule that it had taken some old-timer ten years to evolve: The hotter the day the hotter the water. Feeling refreshed, almost cool, she started back to her room but stopped on the veranda, her eyes held by sundry things on the table, a man's soft shirt, freshly ironed, a roll of khaki cloth, scissors, a thimble and one of those pepper-pot tins of assorted needles. She stared at them long and helplessly, her lower lip trembling; then she went in, put on her things except her frock and covered its lack with her cloak. She did her hair last of all, by way of change, and just as she finished heard Bathtub's call to breakfast.

Neither white man nor black was in evidence but even so the day passed swiftly, so many were the new features of the craal's changing scene. She

chose a book at random, had her hammock-chair dragged into the shade of the dining tree and stretched out to her first lesson in lazy content. Gradually she grew drowsy with the heat but not so sleepy that she failed to hear from away off the far-carrying report, six times repeated, of a high-powered rifle.

Bathtub, squatted near by, looked up with a beatific smile. "Master," he stated.

It was two hours later when the incident was repeated in every detail save that the shots came from still farther away; and about three hours after, once more the thing happened only this time Bathtub rolled his eyes and hugged himself in gormandizing anticipation as he breathed for the third time the word, "Master!"

Andrea was vaguely interested until the sequel to those eighteen shots began to arrive and then she was stunned with horror. Amid the shouts of men and the shrill ululululooing of the women they began to come in, beast after beast, each trussed to a pole and borne by six, sometimes eight, naked and straining blacks.

First to arrive were five sable antelope, beautiful

even in death, the proud sweep of their glorious horns inverted, thick tongues dragging in the dust. The bearers did not stop within the craal but passed through it, chanting wildly as though they were engaged in a perverted Bacchanalian pageant of blood. Women and children streamed after them and even Bathtub looked longingly in the direction they had gone.

Scarcely had the hullabaloo of their passing died into the distance when a new contingent arrived. These were not chanting, they were talking garrulously, repeating, if she could have understood them, every detail of a *tour de fusil;* six head for six shots, the last five at running game! "M'sungo, M'sungo," the one word she knew, cropped out from their jabber with the steady recurrence of a haunting fugue. What they bore were six wilde-beeste, male and female, buffoons of the plains, still pitifully grotesque, their horse-like tails trailing like discouraged funeral plumes.

"Oh, White Man," gasped Andrea covering her eyes, "oh, M'sungo!"

And then it came again, four loads this time but every one as big as a horse. Eight men strained under each carcass of eland, largest and gentlest

of all the hundred varieties of antelope that swarm over the length and breadth of Africa.

Andrea arose but her knees trembled so that she quickly sat down in one of the wicker chairs, clutching its arms with hands gone white as though all the blood in her body had hidden in shame. Then came the white man, followed by gunbearers, water-boy and trackers. His khaki helmet was pulled low on his forehead but not low enough to hide his eyes, sunken and rimmed with shadows of fatigue. His face and his bare arms were streaked with sweat and dust. His shirt and trousers clung to him in great dark blots of moisture. He nodded to Andrea as he made straight for his hut.

Suddenly her strength came back to her. She sprang up and rushed to cut him off. "You are a murderer," she gasped as she faced him. Her eyes blazed but her lower lip was trembling piteously.

The man stopped in his tracks and stared at her. Gradually he took in her meaning. "You think I do it for—for fun?" he exclaimed.

Already Bathtub was pushing a cup of hot tea into his hands. He took it, stirred and drank it without ever taking his eyes from Andrea's face.

"Murderer," she repeated tensely.

The man handed back the empty cup, glanced at his hut and turned his back on it with a sigh. "Come with me," he said.

"I shall never go anywhere with you," replied Andrea.

The man faced her quickly. "You will come with me or be carried. Take your choice."

Their eyes met and held in one of those struggles that measure not so much the contending characters as the strength of the opposing purposes. The man's purpose won out. Andrea dropped her eyes and followed him. He passed swiftly through the craal and along a well-worn path that led to the fringe of the forest. All along that fringe could be seen the rising blue spirals of smoke from small camp-fires. Under an enormous mafuta tree the butchers were at work, four to each carcass, skinning, cutting, hacking with practised hands. The meat was being piled in heaps and at each heap was stationed a black captain. Under his direction a host of helpers were cutting the flesh into minute portions.

Beyond the limits of the tree's far-flung branches squatted a black army,—men with assegais in their hands, women and children with queer conical bas-

kets in their laps. Their tongues chatted incessantly but their eyes never wavered in their lustful gaze on the meat. Physically these people were, without exception, a joy to the eye but beyond them, grouped together under another tree and hopelessly staring, was a small band that brought sudden tears to Andrea's eyes. Never before had she seen human bones and skin without flesh, live eyes staring from the skeleton emblem of death.

At last the division of the sanguinary spoil was completed. The well-fed army lined up, each and every man accompanied by woman or child as beast for the small burden. These men were also provided with individual brass checks which they cast into the baskets at the feet of the captain upon receipt of their portion of meat. At the end, to Andrea's amazement, the tally was exact except that it left the starving group out of the count.

Through it all the white man had stood grimly by, uttering not a word and leaving her to the assistance of her own intelligence. She began to understand; the possessors of the brass checks had worked for them. But her eyes lingered pitifully on the starving.

She turned to the man with a gesture of pleading,—pleading for pardon for herself, mercy for the silent suffering. "What about these?" she asked.

"They will receive a ration of millet," he answered. "To-morrow the men will crawl to the forests, twice a week they will get meat checks. In a month they and their families will be fat and sleek. We refuse no one who wishes to work."

Like all he said, it was an uncompromising statement. It stood alone, scorning further justification, omitting even the suggestion of appeal. He turned to lead the way back to the craal and, once there, promptly disappeared into his hut. Half an hour later Andrea was nervously moving about her room wondering whether to put on her frock or not when Bathtub arrived with a message. Did she wish to dine alone or with M'sungo?

"Tell your master," she answered, "that I will dine with him with pleasure."

During the meal, the white man talked, giving her listlessly certain explanatory information. "Eight months ago," he said, "I struck this country. It was desolation. In spite of the big river which is quite near by the whole district was in famine. I

passed through ruined craal after ruined craal and in some of them dead bodies lay about, too dried out in life even to rot. The game swarmed as it does only in dry seasons and thrived."

Andrea held both hands out toward him as though to stop him. "Don't—," she cried, "don't think I haven't understood!"

"Upon my word," remarked the man dryly, "you're getting sincere!"

She sank back in her chair with a look of reproach but he did not notice it. "I'm telling you," he continued, "I came to hunt and recover—" He paused.

Andrea could not keep her eyes from glancing toward the aeroplane. It was as though she had followed his hidden thought. He flushed slightly, changed his sentence and finished, "And for another purpose. But almost on the day of arrival, I made a discovery in the forest. Out of it has grown an industy that employs hundreds of natives and never refuses a new recruit. I am working absolutely without title and should you return to civilization my ruin would be quite within your grasp."

"And that is why I must stay," said Andrea.

"No," said the man reading her face. "If I could drop you back to-morrow there on the beach where I found you, I would do it."

She felt a definite surge of pleasure, out of all proportion to the occasion. "Thank you," she whispered, and then flushed at a sudden wonder as to the exact nature of a feeling of gladness over the fact that she was not called upon then and there to decide whether in her heart she wished to go or stay.

"But I can't," continued the man. "I can't leave my people or my work for two weeks; I dare not trust you to a native escort." He drew away from the table that he might cross his knees, took a cigar and lit it.

"You've eaten nothing," said Andrea.

"I'm too tired to eat just now," he answered.

Presently she arose. "I'm tired too, White Man," she lied. "May I leave you?"

He gave her an almost grateful glance, arose and lifted one side of the net for her to pass. She went to her room to read but an hour later when she glanced out, surprised to see the lights burning under the tree, the white man was still there, hands

dropped upon his knees, head fallen forward, sound asleep in his chair.

Andrea clasped and unclasped her hands nervously. "Oh, why doesn't he go to bed?" she said to herself. "He can't get any comfort out of that sort of thing." Finally she stole out and found Bathtub. "Wake your master," she commanded. "Tell him to go to bed."

The darky grinned up at her sleepily until he grasped her request, then his face took on a look of mixed fear and mischief. "Bathtub wake M'sungo one time plenty long ago and never forget. Missis try it."

She looked at the lax figure, bone-tired, plunged miles deep in slumber, but even from those depths exuding a sense of compelling latent power, and hesitated. Getting up her courage she coughed twice quite loudly but ineffectually and then, feeling almost relieved that nothing happened, stole away on tiptoe.

CHAPTER VIII

THE seven days that followed were much as the first; when the white man was not shooting for the pot he was away overseeing his army of laborers. He ate but twice a day, at half past five in the morning and twelve hours thereafter. To the latter meal Andrea was invariably and formally invited.

At each successive invitation she hesitated a little longer before accepting and on the seventh night she refused. Any woman can easily understand why but the surprising thing was that the man seemed to know just what was happening to her spirit. No stomach living can stand pigeon fourteen days in succession nor is there a maid that can put on the same identical clothes for half that time without feeling demeaned. She knew he knew, for twice during the week he had told her bluntly to hand her lingerie to Bathtub at night and she had found it at her door in the morning, miraculously washed, dried and more or less ironed.

There was nothing in the dawn of the eighth

morning to indicate that it was ushering in a day of days nor did Andrea more than turn her head when shortly after noon two bearers staggered into camp with a steamer trunk slung on a pole between them. There was no reason in the world why she should connect that trunk in any way with herself even when, an hour after its arrival, she beheld approaching the magnificent and unforgettable specimen of black manhood she had last seen on the morning of her ravishment.

The newcomer dismissed the two bearers, making them take the pole and its lashings with them. They departed after one long, disconsolate look. He then seated himself beside the trunk and never moved until, late in the afternoon, the white man appeared, when he arose, saluted and then made a solemn gesture toward the load others had carried.

The white man's eyes lighted up; he seemed more cheerful than he had been in days. "Look at the rascal, Andrea Pellor," he said gravely so that the black would not read the true purport of his words. "He pretends that he has brought this load alone one hundred and forty miles in seven days. He is strong enough to have done it, therefore I

know that he was strong enough to make others do it for him."

"You are right," said Andrea, smiling. "I saw them."

The man spoke to the black in dialect, whereupon he grasped a single handle of the trunk and with one smooth movement passed it over his shoulder right side up to the crown of his head. He then marched with it into Andrea's *caia*.

She sprang up. "Why!" she exclaimed and then added, her heart sinking within her, "You don't think that's one of mine, do you? Because it isn't."

She watched to see his face fall but it didn't. From his pocket he took a bunch of keys, quickly slipped one from the ring and handed it to her. "Please open the trunk. It's certainly yours as is all that it contains." He turned from her and added, "By the way, I'm dining in khaki to-night."

As Andrea walked slowly to her room, clutching the key tightly, she confessed to herself that she was being eaten alive by curiosity. "If only," she breathed, "there should happen to be *one* whole pair of stockings!"

There was nothing in the dawn of the eighth morning to indicate that it was ushering in a day of days

Half an hour later when every last thing the trunk had contained was piled upon her cot, she went to the door and closed it softly; then returned to drop on her knees, throw her arms wide across the accumulation, bury her hot face against one article after another and kiss each in turn!

There is every reason to enumerate that pile of dry-goods if only to put on record for the benefit of the sporting world in general a list that it took many years to compile; two to decide what was necessary; eight to determine what of that wasn't. To begin at the bottom, there were two pairs of stout, brown, high, laced walking-boots; then, in rapid succession, six pairs of lisle thread stockings to match; one pair of boy's pig-skin puttees; six dainty but sensible one-piece undies of softest and whitest woven cotton; three pairs of khaki breeches (youth's size); three khaki skirts, knee length, buttoned with real buttons and buttonholes all the way up the front and all the way up the back; four suits of pajamas, white madras with silk frogs and knobs; six khaki shirts, (two breast pockets each); one belt; three brown ties; one khaki-colored

woolen sweater; one mackintosh with hood; two khaki jackets (enormous pockets); two black hair ribbons and one nut-brown tam-o'-shanter!

There were also a few assorted packages, one or two of which even this frank chronicle refuses to open, but no harm can attach to the mention of a well-stocked house-wife, an equally complete toilet case, a bathrobe, a pair of bedroom slippers, and a long, flat cardboard box that had been at the bottom of the trunk and which Andrea had as yet refrained from exploring. On it was written in a strangely masculine hand: "The Return of the Native."

She opened it now and disclosed one of those adorable filmy hybrid frocks, a double cross between afternoon, evening and elf-land wear; one set of crêpe de chine lovelies; two pairs of silk stockings, one pair of satin slippers. "And he said he's going to wear khaki to-night," she moaned.

Is it necessary to state that she presently got up off her knees and beginning at the head of the bed, started to try on every last thing? She did, and she was only half through when Bathtub knocked on the door and announced, "*Scoff* ready." No invitation this time,—an order.

"Oh, dear!" she sighed and rushed for the utterly inadequate mirror.

Five minutes later her door opened and she stepped out, slowly, like some shy thing of the forest. Flushed of cheek, brilliant of eye, she walked toward the man. Oh, big black bow! Oh, hair starting one way and going another, leaping a squared shoulder to come to rest and rise and fall against the rounded face of a firm young breast! Oh, vision! Oh, youth! Oh, day and hour of the gay heart! The man looked and saw that her knees were round, her legs straight. "Thank God," he murmured.

He was dressed as she was, tit for tat, except for the big black bow and the very short skirt; and like her his hands were thrust, boy fashion, in the side pockets of his open khaki jacket. As she came close their eyes met and smiled. "I didn't put on the leggings," she said shyly. It was as though in changing back to ways and clothes like those of childhood she had suddenly rid herself of the hardening years between.

"You were right," said the man. "They're for the brush and when mosquitoes are bad."

Her face lit with pleasure. "You'll let me go into the brush?"

"Never alone," he answered quickly. "But you may go with me whenever and wherever you like."

"And may I still call you just White Man? Somehow it seems impertinent now."

"Don't tease me," said the man lightly and then his face fell. "Don't make me feel old."

"Old!" cried Andrea. "Who could be old tonight? Why, White Man, we're—we're kids."

He laughed in his sudden relief. "So we are. So we shall be."

"Excuse me," said Andrea solemnly. "Did I hear you laugh?"

At that he laughed again, not uproariously, but as though his slow smile had become vocal for the occasion. Andrea nodded in a pleased way as if she were congratulating herself on guessing aright; it was a laugh. When the liqueurs and the coffee came, she started chasing a pellet of bread around an empty plate with a straight, small finger. "You fix one," she said, "and we'll have a race."

The man watched her indulgently but absent-mindedly. Presently he filled two glasses. "My dear

Andrea Pellor," he said gravely, "let us drink to all the hearts in the world to-night that are happy and unafraid."

She stood up to the toast and after it they sat in a long silence. It was Andrea that broke it. "You know, White Man, I'm a woman."

"Of course you are," he said quickly, a wary look coming into his eyes.

"Yes," said Andrea. "So of course, too, I'm curious."

He gave the deep sigh of relief of one who finds that the ice is quite thick, after all. "Specify, please."

"Well," said Andrea. "It's that trunk. My brain has come all undone to-night. I've puzzled and puzzled but I can't make out quite how that trunk happened."

"And no wonder," said M'sungo. "It's simple enough, however, to the male mind. Let me help you. When I came out eight months ago my sister was with me,—just about your size, just about your age. That trunk was meant for her and had been sent ahead with my kit. She never needed it." He paused and added, "I lost her at Cape Town."

"Oh!" cried Andrea, too-ready tears springing to her eyes.

"Yes," he continued calmly. "It was pretty bad. She married a cub of a naval officer and is traipsing around the world on the chance of hitting the right port and lunching with him once."

Andrea's hand went to her breast and stayed there as though to imprison her fluttering heart. "White Man," she said, "please don't do that to me again,—ever. You see, I've always been silly about things that get hurt."

"Forgive me," he said. "I was thoughtless."

"Careless, perhaps; thoughtless, never," said Andrea, smiling once more. "Well," she went on, clasping her hands and throwing her head back, "I'm for your sister. The woman that could make up that trunk is a genius."

"She would be," remarked the man enigmatically.

Andrea paused in her thoughts; then came wide awake and looked at him narrowly. "What do you mean?"

"Nothing."

"White Man, didn't a woman make up that trunk?"

"No, there are few women living that could. Think it out. That trunk was all bone, muscle and sinew—with an after-dinner cigarette at the bottom. Why, the last time I saw Maisie she had two small moving vans and a wicker house she thought she was going to bring with her. I'd fixed it with a quartermaster to drop the lot overboard in the night and at the last moment. She never even heard of this trunk."

During his long speech the color had been rising in Andrea's cheeks. "I don't think I like you as much as I did," she said slowly. For a moment she looked at him out of eyes that were as old as her years. "I suppose it had to come out. Somehow you were getting too good to be true. You bought and packed all those things yourself."

He met her gaze steadily. "Don't," he whispered, "don't let's be old."

"All right," said Andrea with a quick shrug of one shoulder. "But you've known lots of women, haven't you?"

"You exaggerate," he answered, smiling. "I've met lots of women."

"Pshaw!" said Andrea. "That's another old

crock of a shibboleth. Some men know lots about women,—a jolly sight too much."

"That's different from knowing women," said M'sungo quietly. "It's no shibboleth, that old belief. Woman, to man, is an eternal voyage of discovery,—a land of valleys and peaks, of lights and shadows, of storm and aching peace. Continents and oceans are lost in her untraveled heart and when she throws wide her arms, the way is open to Heaven and Hell."

"I'm going to bed," murmured Andrea and stole away.

CHAPTER IX

IT WAS just as well for Andrea that she had gone early to bed for at five o'clock of the next morning a rock was hurled at her door that almost burst it in. Even so she did not awake with a start. She came soberly and decently into consciousness until the full meaning of certain dialogue that was going on outside brought her to her feet with a jump.

"Didn't that get her?" yelled M'sungo's voice from half across the craal.

"No, Master," answered Bathtub. "Missis sleep plenty hard, same like pickanin."

She slipped on her bathrobe, opened the door and put out her head. "Were you calling me?" she asked with early-morning dignity.

"Not exactly," answered the white man in the same tone. "Breakfast in twenty minutes; bath when you come home." He turned to give orders to a group of his captains.

Andrea was instantly thrilled to the new adventure. She called to Bathtub to bring her washstand and water and rubbed one bare foot against the

other in impatience until he was out of the way; then she dressed feverishly and ran out, eager as a boy bent on a first spring hunt for early apples.

"Why, it's cold!" she cried. "Great, isn't it?" she added, rubbing her hands together.

M'sungo nodded and turned to look her over. "Just the same," he said, "you'll wear a pith helmet instead of that sex-appeal woolly thing."

He sent Bathtub to fetch one from his hut. In ten minutes they had breakfasted; in five more they were off. A long line of blacks preceded them, behind came M'sungo's gunbearer, water-boys, Bathtub, a carrier or two, and an ancient donkey half hidden under an enormous cow-boy saddle.

"What a funny-looking old donkey!" remarked Andrea. "What's he for?"

"For you, when you get tired," answered M'sungo.

"Really! For me?" said Andrea and glanced back with increased interest at the long Roman-nosed face that seemed to be pondering eternally over the indignity of vasty ears. "What's his name?"

M'sungo threw back his head and laughed softly. "Why," he said, "I never thought I'd have to tell

any one when I named him. We call him Marguerite."

As though he had heard and deplored the adding of insult to generations of injury, the donkey stopped in his tracks and brayed. Above the raucous cry sounded the peal of Andrea's silver laughter. "Oh!" she gasped, "isn't he *clever*. And why on earth did you call him Marguerite?"

"I named him after a friend of mine."

"Was she as ugly as all that?"

"Oh, no. She's about the prettiest woman I ever knew but she was just like him inside. Try to head him off some time."

"The best way to head off a woman," mused Andrea, "is to marry her."

"That's so," agreed M'sungo promptly, "but friendship has limits."

They were necessarily walking in single file on the narrow path and Andrea was behind him. She looked quizzically at his back and wished she could see his face instead. But her attention was soon drawn to other things. They had come to the fringe of the forest. With curves and undulations it stretched as far as the eye could see. Spaced from

two to three hundred yards apart and set well out from the shadow of the trees were mysterious piles of something or other that shone straw-gold under the morning sun.

At the first of the heaps M'sungo stopped. "This," he said, kicking at the silky coils, "is the greatest substitute for hemp and sisal that the world has yet produced. The war has made it worth—well, not quite its weight in gold, unless you measure it by sheer profits on the cost of production. It is nothing but the bark of the temba trees which make up the bulk of all the forests in this region, prepared by hand on a process of my own."

Andrea looked at the endless piles of fiber, tons and tons of it, stretching away like the posts in a prairie fence. "And you say this is a secret?" she asked incredulously.

He smiled. "It is so far," he answered. "But if you knew all the facts you wouldn't find it so wonderful. In the first place this bit of country is cut off from every other by long stretches of waterless wilderness. In the only direction that that isn't true, which is straight down the river, there is a wide zone that in four hundred years has never been

pacified by the European dominence of the Province. Those unsubdued tribes have been my friends in times past and are my allies to-day. No white man but myself has ever crossed their boundaries and lived; consequently they can tell no tales to my harm. Do you begin to see?"

Andrea nodded.

"Then at the coast," he continued, "just within the mouth of the river, I have a blind in the way of a sisal plantation. That gives the excuse for a steamer with machinery, say, to come in without arousing suspicion. I chartered one just small enough to cross the bar at high tide, just big enough to go anywhere on the seven seas. With the profits on her first full cargo, I bought her outright and smiled even at the war price they asked for her. She has made two trips since."

"So you are a profiteer on the way to making a war fortune," commented Andrea.

He flushed more deeply than she had yet seen him. "If you stay here long enough," he said stoutly, "you may understand."

He turned from her and plunged at right angles into the forest. She followed him into the chill air

under the great trees. From what she had read in books she had thought that all forests in Africa were jungles, impassable to the axe-less wayfarer and now,—she caught her breath at the poignant memory of the silent, open reaches under the beeches at Pellor.

The temba trees had clean, sturdy trunks that rose to a height of thirty feet or more; from there they branched out, their widely domed tops interlacing in an endless succession of cathedral arches. Under them stretched low, open vistas draped with pendants of Spanish moss, still as stalactites. Under foot was a deep carpet of the tiny temba leaves, dried brown and crisp as the shells of ripe chestnuts. There was no brush.

All too soon, following M'sungo's lead, Andrea came out with him into a wide clearing which, simultaneously with their arrival, began to ring to the blows of many axes. Through all its length it swarmed with blacks at work; some felling trees, some stripping them of bark, others gathering it and still others stacking the bared wood and cleaning up the general litter according to the most approved rules of modern forestry.

A thought came to Andrea. "Why did you start cutting way in here?" she asked.

"If ever," replied the man, "you come back across the plains after a hard day's hunt and see the sun on the new leaves of the temba trees, you'll know."

"Oh, will I!" said Andrea happily. "That's just why I asked, because I guessed it wasn't in you to disfigure the noble face of the forest you're murdering."

"Not murdering," said M'sungo quickly. "These blacks all climb like monkeys. I could strip the trees at half the expense if I didn't know that a felled forest with a seeder left here and there will recover in time, a stripped one left standing, never."

"What a wise man you are!" said Andrea quite seriously.

"But that was an easy one," he said. "I learned it from passing through the mangrove industry just once. You can't help reading things that are written on the face of Nature,—not after you've tracked game."

They walked up the wide swath of the clearing slowly, with many stops on the part of M'sungo to encourage, direct or criticize. They passed beyond

the ringing of the axes into a region pungent with the smell of burning greenwood. Along one side, the side away from the fringe of the forest, was a long line of smoke spirals.

He waved at them. "D' you see what they're doing? Our axes ran out so here we're felling in the old native way with a ring of fire at the foot of each doomed tree."

By eight o'clock the sun was at its full strength and Andrea was thankful indeed for her pith helmet; by ten she was thinking that noontime would never, never come. M'sungo was too engrossed with his work to notice her. She kept on, riding her nerve, until she felt that in another moment she must topple over; then she laid a quivering hand on his arm. He turned quickly, looked at her face gone white in spite of the heat and cursed himself aloud. He led her through the fringe of the forest to the deep shade at its open edge, made her lie down and showed her that a helmet, right side up on the ground, makes an excellent pillow.

"There's a little more air here," he explained and then whistled shrilly a cadence of three syllables. "Do you know what that means?" he asked. *"Cho-*

cu-la, or in near-English, *scoff*. Of course, you don't want to eat right now but it's just as well to have the lunch-basket where you can keep your eye on it and get your mouth to watering." He drew a little book from his pocket and tossed it down beside her; then he took off his coat and dropped it.

"I'm off," he said. "Promise you won't be lonely for it will be hours before I get back."

Andrea's lower lip trembled. "Aren't you coming for lunch?"

He looked down at her and shook his head. "There may come days of picnics, youngster, but they're a long way off."

"Please come back," she insisted.

He met her eyes with a hardened gaze. "There's not a woman living," he said slowly, "that will let a man work when she's around—if she can help it."

"You're thinking of people in love," said Andrea to start an argument and gain time.

"Of course I was," said the man on the instant. "Can't you let me work?"

"Beast," said Andrea and rolled over on her side, one moist hand for a pillow in place of the hard helmet. She did not watch him go, she did not see

Bathtub and another boy arrive with table, chair and lunch-basket, all in a single small load, for before it happened she was far away in the land of Nod. When she awoke she was sorry, for, awake, the hot hours passed on laggard feet. At midday she ate; then she tried to read, but by four in the afternoon she was desperate for something to do. She determined to sleep again and, just as she was dozing off, a whisper came to her,—one of those carefully measured whispers that reach the intended ear and go no farther.

"Missis!"

She turned. "What is it?" she asked.

"Gashly! Missis," breathed Bathtub and the agony in his appeal to her to go slow was so eloquent that she caught the spirit if not the meaning of the word.

She raised her head ever so carefully and looked out over the plain. "Oh!" she murmured.

A quarter of a mile away a band of sable were grazing and in a moment she could tell that they were feeding directly toward her. Taking her time she drew herself by almost imperceptible gradations into a sitting posture, locked her arms around her

knees and dropped her chin on them. Her eyes were alive and wide. "Oh!" she breathed again, "oh, you beauties!"

Out of the corners of her eyes she looked to see what the "boys" were doing. They were like bronze statues fixed immutably to a settled pose, only, their eyes gleamed and their faces were wreathed in the broadest of smiles. As she watched him, Bathtub came out of character with an almost ghostly movement. Without turning his head or stirring more than his arm, he picked up a pinch of dust, raised it high and let it sift from between finger and thumb. The tiny cascade started straight down and then swayed toward the forest, away from the plain.

Transcending the impossible, Bathtub's grin actually broadened. *"Moia* good, Missis," he whispered.

"What's *moia?"* whispered back Andrea.

"Wind," translated Bathtub. "Wind good. They come right here—eat your lunch!" he chuckled.

"Shsh!" hissed Andrea, terrified lest he destroy his own prophecy.

Closer and closer grazed the herd, stepping daintily from tuft to tuft of fodder. Their black

and white faces, the sweep of their arching horns, their brown bodies that glistened in the sun as though they had been groomed, their nervously-flicking bobbed tails, their incredibly slim legs, combined all the attributes of fascination,—beauty, vigor, strength, motion,—and filled the eyes of the watchers to overflowing.

Andrea's mind flew back to a conversation that already seemed of long ago. What was it the white man had said? "Never" something. "Never again can a city smother you, for it will be in your power to sit spellbound, your eyes fixed ten thousand miles away!" She could believe it in the face of this new memory that was no memory, for even now it was of the future; in her heart, it shared eternity.

Her parted lips formed silent words. "Big as bullocks," she said to herself, "and they call them antelopes!"

In the van of the herd stepped a mighty bull, his tiny hoofs lifting high as though he boasted that his weight was really nothing. Straight toward the forest and Andrea he led his little army until presently she could smell the stable odor of their bodies.

Her heart was beating like a trip hammer. She tried to hold her breath. Her bosom rose and fell in a fluttering undulation. The bull looked up and saw her. His horns went back and he squatted, hesitating on the brink of the mighty spring of fright. In his eyes was a gleam, unbelievably wicked.

Then the crack of a rifle, the thud of a bullet in flesh, a body hurled into air by the death-throe and falling in a heap, legs doubled up, neck outstretched, blood gurgling from nostrils and mouth!

Andrea buried her face in her lap, trying to blot out the sight from her eyes, and sobbed as though her heart were breaking. She did not hear the wild cry of Bathtub nor see his crazy gyrations about the prostrate brute, but when the white man spoke her mind leaped to meet the justification in his words without which she felt she could never have looked upon his face again.

"Stop your crying," he said sharply. "When a sable bull gets as close as that, there's no telling which way he's going to go."

CHAPTER X

M'SUNGO led the march home; the donkey came next with his nose glued to M'sungo's back and with Andrea in the saddle. Clinging to his tail with both hands, more as a drag-anchor than as deterrent, came Bathtub and behind him the long rank and file. Andrea was still sniffing a little but her tear-stained face, like a child's, was already cloudless.

"I think Marguerite is too funny," she said. "He's got his eyes tight shut and he's steering himself by his nose in your shirt. Will you please tell Bathtub to let go his tail?"

"Bathtub knows his business," replied M'sungo but, as it happened, even as he spoke Bathtub cast off one hand to receive a lighted white cheroot, a communal bit of property that had come up the line of personal attendants, six puffs to a "boy." He never got a puff for, on feeling less weight behind, Marguerite opened his eyes, looked straight back on both sides of his lean body at once, flattened his ears and broke from the path at a dead run.

The high cantle of the stock saddle saved Andrea from staying just where she started from. She was a horsewoman, born and bred, consequently even while her amazement was at its height, she wrapped the reins on her arms, drove her toes into the bucket stirrups and straightened her young back into the long, strong and sawing pull of calm desperation, for Marguerite was headed straight for the leafy low-hanging branches of a vast mafuta tree.

Yells of delight resounded from every black man in sight with exception of poor Bathtub who had regained his double hand-hold only after having been jerked from his feet and now dangled along like the proverbial village tin can on the tail of a terrified dog. This time it was the tin can that was terrified, not, however, at its bumping proximity to flashing heels but at what the master would do to him, Bathtub, if he let go.

Above the din came to Andrea's very busy brain a shout that stood out like a sudden scream in a long nightmare, "Marry him or jump off!" Before she could grasp the deadly import of those words she was hanging like a half-closed jackknife over a limb of the tree watching Marguerite browse as

though nothing had happened, his tail still tightly grasped by a now grinning Bathtub.

Ten minutes later the procession was under way again in the order aforementioned with the variation that the reins of the bridle were knotted to the back of M'sungo's belt. Andrea, too dazed to protest, pondered over this indignity but when she finally found her voice, she decided to use it for another purpose.

"I think it was horrid of the blacks to yell the way they did," she remarked with suspicious meekness. "Don't you?"

M'sungo seemed relieved. "I certainly do," he answered promptly. "But you'll have to accustom yourself to the fact that *obolo* is the basic consideration between the black man and all women in the world. He never gets away from its diminutive values in a question of sex."

"What *do* you mean?" asked Andrea, mystified. "What's *obolo?*"

"In this country," explained M'sungo, "it's from two to three pounds a head. I told you about it the other day. *Obolo* is the market price for women. The best native authorities, however, contend that

M'sungo led the march home

obolo is not a purchase price but the remuneration to the father for the board, training and general keep of his daughter up to the time of her marriage, and they base their argument on the fact that while women are property they are not chattel, title being non-transferable."

"Can damaged goods be exchanged?" inquired Andrea icily.

"Certainly," he answered, absorbed in his topic. "Exchanged where there's another daughter available; where there isn't, money is refunded by order of the courts. The native legislation on the subject is absolutely complete. But what I was driving at is that in spite of the contention mentioned above, wherever a woman is concerned a black can never get it out of his head that she can be replaced at the regular market price. Now you've got the kernel of his whole attitude toward women."

"So if it had been you they wouldn't have laughed and yelled."

"In this case, yes," he said. "They most certainly would, because they had no direct responsibility. But where responsibility attaches the rule for men is a life for a life and it's a rule that has no excep-

tions. You're leading me into a maze of folk-law but if you are really interested I'll give you an example that will throw the main fact into highlight."

"Oh, I'm interested all right," said Andrea. "If you were looking at me I'd yawn."

"Well, here you are then," continued M'sungo, inwardly and unconsciously pleased to talk as is every man when he is master of his subject. "If a native run amok and attacks his neighbor it's up to the neighbor to beat it; for, if he kills the madman, even in desperate self-defense, he will have to replace him with a man from his own family who becomes a marketable slave. By the same token it is up to the kin of the madman to kill him promptly because they must make good with another for every male he does away with."

"What a saving to the State," remarked Andrea. "No asylums, no brain-storm trials!"

"You're persiflaging," said M'sungo, "but, as a matter of fact, the system is little short of genius. The point I was going to bring out, however, is that any one can brain a woman if he feels like it and get away with the identical *obolo* her husband paid for her."

"You seem to be a great admirer of the native social system," said Andrea quietly.

"I am," answered M'sungo. "For natives, of course."

"Are you sure you're not a bit tainted with it for yourself?"

"Sure," he answered promptly. "That's part of the secret of my grip on every country I've shot over. I'm aloof. I've never turned my back on the White Man's God. Circular A is not for me."

"What's Circular A?"

He hesitated. "Circular A," he said finally, "is the regulation that governs the relations between British officials under the Colonial Office and the women of the tribes they govern."

"I'm British," said Andrea, after a pause, "and I blush for the necessity."

"You are prompt, like most of us," said M'sungo, "to sit in judgment before any force of nature that you've never felt. Poor devils of clean-bred youngsters! Take one that I knew. Three weeks' training under his predecessor, crazy to leave; a hundred thousand natives under his sole rule; one, perhaps two, bearded white faces a year. The long, long

days after the sportsman has been swallowed by the pot-hunter, when game becomes just meat! The hallucination that here is eternity, come before its time! And then, the fatal hour at dusk when a passing native girl—any girl—looks to him like some woman at home! He marries, damn it, not by canonicals perhaps, but by the common law of the land, and the 'people at home' shout 'crucify him,' but in the end it's God alone that will judge his agony and measure the price."

He stopped speaking and for a long time they traveled in silence. The sun was sinking fast,—so fast that it seemed to be dropping by jerks, like the loose hand of a grandfather's clock. Its long level rays, robbed of heat, swept over the plains and appeared to bank up against the young leaves of the temba forest into billowing heaps of copper. In the distance, the huts of the craal cropped into view above the level of the high grass. The sun glorified them, too. They looked like a covey of partridges snuggling down, keeping very still to evade the eye of the hunter.

"There is no twilight in the tropics," said M'sungo, "by the deliberate judgment of God who

knows the capacity of the heart of man and would not have it burst."

"I can feel what you mean," answered Andrea, "even though you haven't really said it in words. The heart can hold just so much beauty and no more; and even now, mine is aching!"

"Andrea Pellor," said M'sungo, "you have the faculty of your sex. You have pinned the butterfly."

She felt a sudden revulsion, a rage at this man, this stranger, who talked as she imagined he would fight, without gloves. Her eyes narrowed. "When I asked you," she said presently, "if you weren't tainted with the native view-point toward women, I didn't have in mind anything physical or nasty. It seemed to me—. By the way, when Marguerite bolted, just what was it you shouted at me?"

He paused in his stride so suddenly that the dozing donkey butted into him and almost knocked him over. "Eh? What?" he asked to gain time.

"Come on," persisted Andrea. "Just say it again, —what you shouted."

"Well," lied M'sungo. "I may not remember the exact words but it was to the effect that you'd better head him off or jump off."

"Something like that," said Andrea incisively, "only shorter. You yelled, 'Marry him or jump off!'"

"I believe you're right," said M'sungo and added apologetically, "You see, I didn't have much time to think."

"Exactly!" said Andrea. "Instinctively all you saw was a joke like every nigger in the line. You didn't care *what* happened to me. I might have been brained under that tree and you knew it and all you could think of was that you just had time to get in one more nasty bit of cleverness before—before I died."

"Oh, no," protested M'sungo. "Go easy, now. Why, Marguerite has done that dozens of times. He knows exactly how to slice off his rider. And besides, he always stops."

"But what if he hadn't—what if he had?" continued Andrea hotly. "Oh, you know what I mean. What if he *had* killed me?"

"But he wouldn't," insisted the man weakly. "He wouldn't think of it."

Andrea pounded the horn of her saddle. "But—what—if—he—had?"

M'sungo suddenly whirled, thereby winding the quiescent neck of Marguerite around his waist. He caught Andrea by both arms and fixed her startled eyes with the blaze of his own. "You will have it!" he said, shaking her lightly, "your damned personal element! Well, I'll give it to you. If he'd hurt so much as a hair of your head, I'd have shot him and then myself and left word with you to bury us both in the same grave."

She flushed and looked away. When her eyes came back to his set face there were three kinds of sparkling wickedness in them—tenderness, the forked tongue of a serpent, and a two-edged knife. She chose the knife.

"White Man," she said, "that would have been adorable at the price—simply adorable!"

CHAPTER XI

THE weeks that followed were the remaking of Andrea physically. Each day she walked more and felt it less. From head to toes her body was without blemish and in her eyes, her cheeks and in the spring of her light step, sheer health flew its rejoicing banner. Day by day she followed M'sungo farther afield, took more of an interest in what he was doing because she understood it better and learned to wait before she sat in judgment on his actions, often surprising, always swift and assured. She even hardened herself to accompanying him on his hunts for meat for the camp pot and there was nothing that he did that gave her a deeper insight into his composition than this same butchering.

He made no secret of his distaste for the job and never an apology. Having a disagreeable task on his hands he faced it squarely and going out to kill, laid his plans, held to them with unswerving concentration and killed with a despatch that was blood-curdling but admirable. Many a time Andrea saw his face light up at the sight of a lone spoor, sign of a lordly trophy. He would stop and discuss it

in murmurs with the trackers and in the end, invariably turn from it with a sigh and march on to strike the wide swath of the herd.

Coming up with the rabble,—the mere cattle of the plains—he never lost sight of the main chance. *"Chaia-le,"* would implore the "boys" in the dead whisper that does not carry and he would refuse to shoot, measuring the wind, testing the light and choosing his stance with a deliberation that was maddening to the unarmed looker-on. But when finally the rifle,—one shot in the chamber and five more in the magazine,—rang out, his prescience was revealed, his care rewarded. The bewildered game milled, ran toward him or by him,—never into the eye of the sun. Standing like some bullock appraiser in a paddock, he chose his victims for their weight and felled them with a far, sure blow.

It was during the return from one of these expeditions that he expounded his definition of justifiable plunder. With his memory raw, as is the whole world's, from contact with the long-heralded Superman come to life to expose in the flesh the brutalizing doctrine of "thine is mine if I can take it," he found himself on treacherous ground and his

words picked their way slowly as though bent on avoiding all misunderstanding.

"It is the truth," he said thoughtfully, "that the spirit of man advances only by plunder and the corollary to that is the fact that the plundered world is always the more fruitful, but the unpardonable sin as far as peoples are concerned is the failure to define robbery under arms from productive plunder, and you can almost say the same thing of individual relationship."

"Oh, Mr. White Man," said Andrea, "won't you please look at the sunset?"

"No, I won't," he answered. "I won't because it means a great deal to me to make you see what I've taken months to think out. If I can make you—"

"If you can make me comprehend," interrupted Andrea truculently, "then you can put it safely in a Primer. Is that the idea?"

"More or less," he replied calmly. "It takes simple words to reach the hearts of men and women."

He glanced at her and something of his earnestness passed to her with the look. "Go on," she said kindly. "I'll really try."

"Can you believe me," he continued, "when I tell

you that no one was more surprised than the Superman himself when he assumed flesh after his long preparation and awoke to find himself a Vandal—a Frankenstein? The theory was perfect,—all that was lacking were the things of the spirit, the breath of life without which any animated creation becomes automatically a monster.

"And yet the collective spirit of man advances only by plunder. You can see it in my own country, yesterday, in Africa to-day and it will come in the other Americas to-morrow. The greatest thing ever said by Salisbury, a rock among men, was that ruins are not evidence of occupation and that packed epigram brings us face to face with danger at the fork of the road of freedom."

He glanced at her as though to make sure she were following his thought. "Justifiable plunder," he defined, "is robbery through the giving of self. On that rock I will take my stand and build my house of life. I'll kill game to feed men, scar the earth with railways, rob forests to build ships and gladly see nations fall before a race that shall carry not a sheathed sword but a lighted torch."

"Oh, White Man," said Andrea, her brow puck-

ered with internal effort, "please apply it to individuals."

He started to nail her once again to the traditions of her sex but something truly pleading in the tone of her voice made him turn boldly to the personal, after all and however much we may jeer at it the ultimate measure of sincerity. "I will," he said. "If ever I'm bent on plundering the heart of a woman, I'll travel the highroad of surrender in the company of ravage and love. I'll give and still give and with each giving will grow the heaped mountain of my demands. You see it, don't you? That's justifiable plunder. Now I'll look at your sunset."

"Bother the sunset," murmured Andrea, her cheeks flushed, her eyes dreamy with new thoughts and old emotions. They traveled through a long silence which was finally broken by M'sungo's mumbling half audibly to himself, as he checked off a tally on his fingers.

"What are you saying?" asked Andrea quickly. "What are you doing?"

"Trying to tot up the meat we're bringing in," he explained without looking at her.

"Oh," exclaimed Andrea non-committally, but she measured him with scornful eyes.

While the supply of the vast larder and the supervision of the fiber camp formed the major part of M'sungo's untiring industry they were by no means the total of his affairs. Watching him, Andrea soon learned why he never lunched. He hadn't the time; too many things pressed to his attention. He was a governor on no mean scale and during the midday rest hour he would pass from group to group settling all those disputes which could be determined without recourse to legal argument. In this manner he sifted to a minimum the cases to come before the solemn conclave of chiefs.

On the first occasion that Andrea witnessed this tribal ceremony which occurred monthly at a certain stage of the moon, she began by feeling huffed but, lacking an audience for her mood, soon gave it up for one of scornful amusement which, in turn, surrendered to an interest that almost amounted to awe. The day in question began with the curt information from M'sungo, who appeared carefully groomed and, for the first time in her experience, dressed in punctilious mufti, that she would have to amuse herself

for twelve hours without his aid. Mystified, she awaited developments, and they came,—rapidly.

Under the great acacia was placed a table and behind it a camp armchair. To the right and left of this throne of justice stood in a crescent fourteen other seats of varying dignity,—chairs, petroleum cases, kerosene tins and an inverted bucket,—for every native king, be he monarch of but one village, has the right to sit in the presence of authority, whatever its grade. The white man took the armchair and immediately, to the rumble of a dozen tom-toms, a horde of natives,—all men,—swarmed into the beaten court of the craal. Before Andrea awoke to the fact that seats were at a premium every one was occupied and she found herself standing around aimlessly waiting for M'sungo to send for a chair.

In the meantime, all those natives who lacked the royal hall-mark were squatting on their heels in a vast mass of serrated and concentric circles of which the innermost left an open space whose periphery was determined by the exact circumference of the wide-spreading branches of the tree. Andrea coughed softly but M'sungo did not look up,—in fact, nobody looked up. It was exactly as though

she were not. She slipped to the trunk of the tree and leaned on one hand placed against it. Somehow it seemed an only friend in an empty world.

The preliminary palaver was a matter of much leisurely ceremony, guttural pronouncements, grunts, pauses, more monologues, repeated grunts; but, once it was over, M'sungo settled back with a sigh and started dispensing justice with a breathless rush that reminded one of the manner in which he despatched game.

It seemed to Andrea that he never waited to hear more than the statement of the offense when he would immediately pronounce sentence. "Twenty lashes; Next! Thirty lashes; Next! Twelve lashes; Next," at the rate of about a case for every two minutes. Nine times out of ten the victim would smile sheepishly and withdraw; in the tenth case there would come a look of sullen wonder into the culprit's face, whereupon the white man would promptly call a halt and demand more evidence. Such cases were then allotted half an hour and even an hour each, and without exception resulted in the acquittal of the prisoner at the bar.

Andrea was suddenly aware of M'sungo's voice

indubitably addressed to her though he kept his eyes to the front and spoke in a toneless monologue as if he were communing with himself. "Behold! Psychology on the job," he said. "Watch their faces. Every native that knows his sentence to be just, takes it with an apologetic smile; if he looks sullen, the chances are a hundred to one that he's innocent. I've never gone wrong. They think I'm a wonder. Next!"

One case alone that day was apparently interminable. When at last it was completed M'sungo dropped his eyes for the first time and sat for a long while with bowed head; then he drew erect, looked the prisoner in the eye and spoke three words. A gray hue crept into the black's face as he turned away. "I have surrendered him to the justice of his tribe," murmured M'sungo. "Poor devil!" And Andrea knew that she had witnessed the precursor to an inevitable sentence of death.

Already she had been leaning for some time against the tree trunk, not with her hands alone but with all of her body that could find any restful purchase. Now she straightened and feeling unusually meek at continuing quite unnoticed, picked her way

She slipped to the trunk of the tree and leaned on one hand placed against it.
Somehow it seemed an only friend in an empty world

through the dense and ill-smelling throng to go to her room and try to forget herself and her surroundings in the pages of a back-home book.

That night M'sungo was too tired to talk and excused himself immediately after dinner. Andrea read until her eyes ached and then went to bed wondering if she were feeling only slighted or if existence were actually becoming monotonous. She shrank from the latter admission for she knew that, once made, it would shatter the longest run of sheer peace of spirit which she had experienced in her short but much bored life. She need not have worried. When she stepped out early next morning dressed for the field in compliance with a message from M'sungo to put on her roughest and toughest she was so excited that even the memory of her doubt was blotted from her mind. Something was in the air of the craal that could be felt rather than heard, the sort of something that one could imagine possessing a hive just before it began to hum.

M'sungo was already sitting under the dining tree engaged in a diminutive palaver with three wizened blacks who squatted on the ground squinting up at him and speaking in turn in answer to his

patient questioning. Around them but at a respectful distance were gathered various members of the camp's personal staff. On the faces of the wizened three and also on M'sungo's was the same look of fanatical exaltation, the look that proclaims any group of diverse men brothers at heart.

"What is it?" asked Andrea, breathless from hurrying.

"Elephant," replied M'sungo. He drew a chair to his side. "Sit down," he said softly as one whose mind is half-narcotized and fearful of losing the dream. "Watch and listen for these men bring great tidings." He smiled almost like a boy.

One of the wizened produced a thin wand, about twenty inches in length, freshly broken at one end. He passed it to his companions who stared at it as though they saw it for the first instead of the hundredth time, fingered it, gurgled over it and finally gravely handed it to M'sungo. He went through more or less the same process and returned it to the man who had first produced it with what was apparently a slighting remark.

The man glanced up with a pained look on his face, arose, laid the wand on the ground as a meas-

ure and with laborious fingers began to trace a mighty oval. M'sungo leaned across the table and gazed with fascinated eye; Andrea, watching him, could see the pulse throbbing at his temples. He was a new M'sungo, somebody young, approachable, lovable, an eager boy.

She leaned close to his shoulder. "Please, White Man," she murmured, "please tell me."

Without turning he put one hand out and grasped her wrist as though to still her. "The little man," he explained, "is drawing the spoor of a mighty beast. Look at it and learn it by heart for it will be a photograph."

Having completed the circumference of his oval, the native was making various tracings on its face, dividing it as with a maze of tracks. When he had apparently finished, he sank back on his heels and gazed critically at his handiwork.

"Watch," said M'sungo. "Before he gets up, he'll put in some mark, some distinctive feature that distinguishes this spoor from all others."

No sooner had he spoken than the black leaned forward and with a sure touch deepened two of the cracks till they formed a long narrow V running

diagonally half across the oval. That done he turned abruptly from his drawing, joined his comrades, turned his back on M'sungo and unstoppering a cartridge case, proceeded to take snuff.

M'sungo straightened with a long quivering sigh. "It is well," he said in dialect. "We will go." The three wizened men nodded their heads many times and grunted. With no further instruction, gun-bearers, water-boys, trackers and Marguerite's attendant scattered to their various preparations, hindered by excited women and children. The camp hummed. Bathtub slapped breakfast on the table and then stood on one foot, then on the other in impatience. On the faces of all was the same half-smile, the same look of suppressed but mighty anticipation.

M'sungo ate a few mouthfuls but they seemed to choke him. He pushed back his plate, stuffed his pipe full and lit it. His eyes played over Andrea's face and fired hers with their own brilliance. When he spoke every word thrilled her as though this wonderful morning were surcharged with an emotional current sensitive to every sound and movement.

"Andrea Pellor," he said with a happy twinkle of

mock solemnity in his glance, "you are about to be initiated into the mysteries of the major guild of many centuries, the closest corporation of sport in the world; in three words, the society of elephant hunters. You will probably witness death and I hope and pray it will be the death of the hunted, but for the comfort of your soft heart let me tell you that to-day we go forth not to slaughter but to battle."

He turned his eyes from her face and continued in a more serious strain. "The hunting of elephant is a science. It is a crescendo of delicately balanced factors that starts from two distant points and beginning on a cool foundation of mutual respect passes upward through stages of intelligence against intelligence, caution for caution, perseverance on the heels of endurance, until it meets on the high plane of naked courage and sweeps to its tragic climax of white-hot battle and death."

His eyes came back to hers frankly. "Like all the great sciences," he continued, "it has used the lives of valiant men for stepping-stones so that we who go out to-day are backed by the age-long sacrifice of a noble company. Looking back only to the days of

black powder and the four-bore rifle we are mere pygmies but pygmies carried high on the crest of an ancient tradition. It's because we have an accumulation of knowledge to lean upon that I'm willing to take you with me to-day if you'll promise to surrender yourself to me, to do just exactly what I tell you and no more and no less."

Eyes wide and intent, cheeks flushed and lips parted, Andrea was too excited to speak. She threw out both hands toward him in a gesture of abandon and with an imploring gravity that made her look as though she were giving herself into his keeping not for a day but for all time.

CHAPTER XII

THEY started out, a skeleton cavalcade. The three wizened ones led the way and Andrea measured their importance by the fact that they carried M'sungo's battery of rifles, respectfully surrendered by the gunbearers as a fitting tribute from onlookers to men who were hunters in their own right. M'sungo nodded toward them and spoke to Andrea over his shoulder. "The old boys are my brothers in arms and they carry the guns as a sort of insignia. When it comes down to business they'll slip them to the trained bearers."

Behind Andrea came Marguerite, his attendant before and Bathtub after him; then followed the gunbearers, a single tracker and a single water-boy. No hangers-on were allowed even to see the cortège from the craal. Over one shoulder Bathtub carried slung a cracker tin, container of all the food allotted to the day.

In ten minutes' march they came to the river which, in spite of its proximity to the camp, Andrea now saw for the first time. Often she had suggested

to M'sungo that she wished to visit it but on every occasion his lips had set in a straight line and he had invented manifold reasons for keeping her from its shores. The most efficacious of these arguments were snakes and crocodiles but while she conceded the strength of those two deterrents she could not escape from an intuitive belief that there was something else,—some other and ranking cause in the back of M'sungo's mind.

The river was a treacherous-looking stream, deep, sluggish, bordered for the most part by flat-topped banks. Where its shores were broken into shelving slopes these were covered with a towering growth of reeds and matted elephant grass. There was a sand-spit here and there and on each were lying what appeared to be logs cast up by flood.

As the expedition reached the crest of the bank, thereby coming into full view of the river, the logs, one by one, elevated themselves a foot into the air through all their length and moved silently, swiftly, horribly into the water. Andrea caught her breath. She had seen crocodiles in captivity but never like this, never free to scurry on distorted legs, to sink silently into murky depths and lurk.

"White Man," she whispered, "are they as awful as they look?"

"They are," he answered. "It is pretty generally accepted that more natives succumb to crocs in Africa annually than to any other one cause, not excepting famine and smallpox. It sounds unbelievable until you know the native mind. A man will be taken at a certain crossing and half an hour later you may see his companions leisurely wading the stream at the same place. The explanation is that they consider that the victim lost his life solely by reason of the cheap brand of 'medicine' he carried. Each one is convinced that his own bit of stone, rag or twisted wood is the real thing and nothing can dissuade him until the moment when he too is snatched under."

"How ghastly," said Andrea, "and how pitiful."

"Yes, it is," said M'sungo and added: "Sort of knockout to faith, isn't it? But even crocs have character. There are certain crossings swarming with them where they are known to be friendly and where no one has ever been attacked."

By the time he finished speaking the natives had baled out a wide, clumsy scow and M'sungo nodded

to Andrea to slide down the slippery landing chute and climb in. She was worried as to how Marguerite was to be managed when, to her delight, four blacks picked him up bodily and deposited him in the center of the leaky craft. He did not deign to more than half open his eyes. Propelled laboriously up-stream by poles and then across by clumsy paddles, it took them the best part of half an hour to make the opposite landing. Andrea was surprised that M'sungo's impatience seemed to be dying down and said so.

"Oh," he explained, "there's no great hurry. We aren't after antelope, you know. Three out of every five elephant shot are killed at the noon hour. If the one we are after is traveling, we'll never, never see him for he'll think nothing of ninety miles as a day's stroll. If he's feeding, and that's the probability in this case, we'll come up with him at the heat of the day under a big tree dozing and lazily fanning himself with his ears."

The country across the river was a contrast to anything Andrea had seen. It was what M'sungo called mangy; totally bare in spots and breaking out in others into thorn thickets or oases of thick brush.

Farther up-stream was a forest of high straight trees, much higher than the tembas, but inland this towering growth suddenly fell to a low level of bush that cut a gray line along the horizon. The band of gray was broken here and there by the black dome of a tree.

M'sungo followed the direction of Andrea's eyes. "That long gray patch," he said, "that's elephant bush, but Lord knows when we'll get there."

The wizened men led them up-stream and soon they were in the deep shade of the high forest but not for long. In ten minutes they traversed it for it was nothing but a tongue, a long screen extending from elephant bush to river. Scarcely had they left its shelter when the three hunters paused and with them M'sungo. Andrea pressed forward.

The soggy ground was pock-marked with great holes of varying sizes; the smallest a foot in circumference, the largest, three. "Females and youngsters," murmured M'sungo in explanation, "all trash." He stood quite still, his eyes traveling rapidly over a wide radius, pausing suddenly when the tracker thoughtfully touched a grass blade with his toe or another boy solemnly measured a spoor with

his feet placed one ahead of the other, looked up inquiringly and retired in confusion at the kindly sneer on the faces of the hunters.

"Why are you waiting?" asked Andrea impatiently.

M'sungo flashed a look at her. "Waiting?" he whispered. "We're not waiting. Every man here, according to his lights, is reading. You saw that cheeky gunbearer measure a spoor and then withdraw with a hang-dog look. He thought he had spotted a male bull. He has made himself ridiculous for a year. To-night you'll hear the camp telling the joke on him over and over again. But the tracker touches a blade of grass bent one way with his toe and presently you'll see him touch a twig broken in the opposite direction. There he goes now. He looks as if he were day-dreaming, doesn't he?"

Andrea nodded.

"Well, he isn't," continued M'sungo. "By now he has read the whole story. He knows how many females made this mess of a trail and how many young. He knows when they came and when they went. He could fill in their stay with a dozen inci-

dents, each one complete in itself, such as where a youngster slipped, fell, squealed and got spanked by his mother. But such trimmings of details impress themselves only on his subconscious mind. In reality his whole attention is fixed on the main chance. By the season of the year he knows that this herd is not traveling alone. The track of the males is near by. If we didn't have the three old hunters, we would go up the bank of the river until we struck it, but we don't have to because they found it by chance this morning at the first streak of dawn."

While he talked and the tracker studied, the three wizened sat aloof, taking snuff. Now, at a nod from M'sungo, they arose and proceeded swiftly along the margin of the big trees. Presently they swerved to the left and plunged through undergrowth to a well-marked path. In the fine dust of that run-way Andrea saw the identical monster spoor that the old black had drawn with his finger on the ground beside her breakfast table.

Another halt was called. The tracker squatted by one spoor and then another. He held up three fingers.

"All males?" asked M'sungo.

The tracker nodded.

"Big ones?" said M'sungo with that half-smile of exaltation.

The boy grinned.

M'sungo touched the edge of the mighty spoor with his toe. *"M'culo?"*

"Stalecka!" murmured the tracker and rolled his eyes up into the trees.

"He says it's a whopper," whispered M'sungo and promptly went into action. He took off his jacket and jersey, rolled up his sleeves and tightened his belt. The tracker stripped to his breech-clout and took from one of the wizened a slender-shafted assegai. The three old hunters laid aside the rifles they had been carrying and the gunbearers quietly picked them up.

M'sungo turned to Andrea. "Get on the donkey," he ordered. When she was mounted her eyes were on a level with his own. "Listen," he said. "You'll ride now because when we strike the bush you can't. Please listen because from now until the kill nobody is going to speak to you and if you should say a word out loud you might get six inches of spear in the excitement of the moment."

"Go ahead; I won't speak," said Andrea and pressed her lips tight together.

"When you begin to get hot," continued M'sungo, "just take off what you don't want and drop it. We people ahead can't lose anything if we try. The 'boys' used to pick up my dead matches until I stopped them. When you come to the bush, shed your skirt, get off Marguerite and leave him. Walk lightly and hang on till you drop. If you last long enough, you'll see me take the big gun. That's the beginning of the end and when it happens you are to do just one thing. Look around you. Somewhere near you are bound to see a big tree looming out of the bush. Go to it, hug it, stay with it whatever happens till I call you."

A moment later, they were off at a terrific pace, the tracker in the lead, M'sungo next, then the gunbearers, Andrea, and after her the tagging rest. For hours they kept on without a break or a pause. Andrea watched M'sungo's long stride, fascinated by its unvarying pendulum swing. The gunbearers took shorter steps. They walked pivoting on the ball of the foot; just before each step, their heels jerked inward sharply for the thrust back. She

leaned forward; Marguerite had his eyes wide open. He seemed to be breathing softly as though he, too, were bent on playing the game.

Quite suddenly they came out of the forest into a broken mangy space. The heat and glare was terrific. Here and there were scraggy groups of thorn, apparently burnt up by the sun but in reality very much alive. To one side, an enormous acacia cast its grateful blot of shade. The tracker, pausing at last, looked straight up, transfixed in an eloquent pose.

Andrea followed his gaze. At an incredible height she saw a branch, freshly broken. Her reason battled with incredulity; it told her that only one thing could have reached the branch and snapped it,—the up-flung trunk of the rearing beast they were following. For the first time in her life, measuring again that height, she felt actual awe. M'sungo cast a glance over his shoulder. His face was alight; his eyes shone with a swimming brilliance.

A few minutes later they came to the ragged edge of the elephant bush. The tracker cast left and right with quick, jerky steps. Here the three bulls

had separated; joyful sign, for it showed intention to feed. The tracker came to a halt, dropped the tip of his assegai shaft to a chosen spoor. M'sungo looked back at Andrea impatiently. She threw herself from Marguerite's back and hastily stripped off her jersey, unbuttoned her skirt and let it fall. She stood in helmet, khaki shirt and breeches, puttees, and tightly laced boots,—an adorable study in brown. But M'sungo had no time for artistic effects; he turned from her with a nod and plunged into the bush in the wake of the tracker.

Fortunately for Andrea the going was now much slower. It was not that the spoor was harder to follow,—in fact, it was much easier for through the jungle of stunted sapling no man could pass save where an elephant had plowed a way,—but that now every indication of the game's progress had to be read, studied and accurately valued. Here began the exercise of that finished science which M'sungo had placed so high, giving due credit to those forerunners who had marked its stages with their life's blood.

The state of a parted vine, or a half-masticated

leaf, bore some message upon the true reading of which hung the delicate balance of success or failure. Slower and slower fell the pace and in measured proportion silence was born and seemed to grow and spread and throb till it hung in the air like some stifling all-permeating mist. Beneath it the heart beat with an irregular rat-rat-tat and breath came in hurried gasps. In spite of the men before her, Andrea felt alone, adrift on a sea of unseen but hovering perils. She looked over her shoulder. Only Bathtub was in sight behind her, tense, one foot in air, waiting for her to take her next step before he placed his foot. His naked body, exposed to the merciless sun, streamed with sweat.

Andrea's shoulders ached from holding her arms before her face to ward off the interminably encroaching vines and branches that seemed to oppose the way but invariably parted at her touch. Her tongue was parched, all her clothing laid hands on her every motion with a clammy grip and her body quivered on the fine edge of exhaustion, but she hung on, her eyes above dark shadows casting agonized glances at M'sungo. If only he would

reach for the big gun! If only he would really stop for even a fleeting rest.

The next moment she found herself crowded into the halting group in front. They stood in the sparse shade of a big tree, their eyes sweeping the ground beneath their feet and rising to meet each other's gaze with swift intelligence and swifter understanding. Here was a great reading, the anti-climax of suspense, the pregnant moment of final premonition. The three elephants had come together, they had milled beneath this tree, they were even now indubitably beneath the next they had encountered,—for when a feeding elephant walks in a circle for no apparent reason it is because his thoughts are entirely fixed on taking his noonday nap promptly.

CHAPTER XIII

THE tracker stood unbelievably erect, heels off the ground. It was as though by an effort of will he had suspended himself in air, so still was he, so wholly was his body consecrated to the act of listening. Suddenly his wide nostrils quivered with a visible fluttering and distended till their outer rims showed white. A look of sensual and ineffable content spread over his face as he drew down into his lungs that breath of tainted breeze. He smelled the prey; the wind was right.

Presently Andrea caught the odor and her whole body trembled as from an overmastering physical contact. This smell was unlike all others; the mind gave it color and substance. It crept through the forest like a dark cloud, an ominous warning to all frail creatures to get out of the way. She felt suddenly cold and glanced over her shoulder with a half-formed notion of retreat; then her eyes fell on M'sungo and she forgot all else in an absorption that was above fear.

He had become filled with an essence of youth, as though years of life had rushed from past and

future to fill to overflowing the cup of this one transcendent moment. His face was tense but alight and his ordinarily gray eyes had attained to an unfathomable blue that seemed to deny measure to the depth of his emotion. His thin lips were drawn in the crooked line of a fixed smile,—a smile that struggled on the verge of an infinite solemnity. When he moved he gave an indefinite impression of disembodied action as if spirit alone passed on, leaving flesh behind. Like a black monitor the tracker went before him.

Andrea was suddenly aware that M'sungo carried the big gun. Its dead weight of eleven pounds lay in his hands lightly as though it also were sustained by a spiritual force. She had not seen him take it and there was something ghostly in the mere fact of his possession of it. Her mind was in a turmoil; she knew that upon the taking over of the big gun had hung some vital instruction to herself but in that primal moment of suspense, memory was an agonizing blank and nothing more. She followed blindly in the cautiously pausing footsteps of the single gun-bearer that crept before her, close on the heels of his master.

Infinity seemed to come and go before they had advanced twenty paces. She came to the bare trunk of a big tree whose top had been felled by lightning and at that moment M'sungo looked back, a terrible frown on his face. Without taking her eyes from his she leaned against the stump of the tree and put her arms around it. Memory came to her. She remembered what he had told her to do. She hugged the tree in a great relief while her eyes still followed the white man and the two black shadows that he seemed to throw, one before, one behind.

Suddenly the tracker paused with an unmistakable finality. His hands went up in an even swift gesture of warning. His body sank gradually lower and lower till it stretched flat and still as a log at the side of the narrow trail. With long-studied, cautious movements the white man passed over him and stood erect, at once steady and quivering, as heat waves quiver steadily in the air arising from parched soil.

Not forty paces from where Andrea hugged her protecting trunk and scarcely twenty in advance of M'sungo, the domes of two trees topped the even mass of the saplings about them. Into the shadows

beneath these trees he was peering with an intensity that communicated itself to Andrea. She too stared desperately as though by an effort she might send light into darkness with her gaze.

Presently she was rewarded; three shadows within the shadow slowly took form. Once seen, they advanced in distinction until they stood out to vision as does the Coal Pit on a starry, moonless night. They were three clouds, ominous, dusky, thunderous. Suddenly from one of them came a rumble that rolled ponderously away through the silent world. Andrea, ignorant of the majesty of the intestinal commotions of the mightiest of beasts, snatched a fleeting impression that somewhere beyond the brazen sky, a storm was brewing.

The white man still stood, tense but immovable. Gradually Andrea's senses gathered to the fact that this was no pause. He was waiting,—waiting deliberately or was it as one who stands fatally fascinated and paralyzed on the threshold of disaster? Her heart was beating with a deafening throb. She was sure the natives about her could hear it just as she was convinced she could hear the equal tumult in their own breasts.

Then her eyes, glued to the three black clouds, saw one of the lesser of them move, raise vast blankets of ears and flap them, starting an audible gust of wind. A great trunk wound and unwound, rose lazily to incredible heights, reached a limb and tore it with a scream of rending fibers from the parent tree. The beast turned slightly to avoid the avalanche of boughs. Instantly the white man's arms swept into motion. He leveled the big gun at an upward slant upon the still immovable central cloud and fired.

All the silence in the world was rent asunder by that shot. With a rending crash as of a thousand gatling guns, one, two, twenty elephants swept through the sea of saplings and away. It was as though an angry God had snatched up the forest like a sheet and ripped it apart. In the terrific whirlwind of sound gone mad, the second bark of the rifle was quite lost to the ear.

M'sungo turned and automatically seized his supporting gun. His eyes swept the back trail, looking for Andrea. She was gone. "Bathtub!" he roared.

The boy ran to him, his face working with every emotion known to the black breast,—joy, triumph,

greed, cupidity and fear. The last was predominant and with reason for M'sungo dropped his gun, shot out both hands to the black's throat and lifted him strangling into the air. "Damn you," he growled, "where's your Missis? Where is she?" The boy's eyeballs protruded farther and farther from his contorted face.

"Here I am," panted Andrea.

M'sungo relaxed his grip; Bathtub dropped to the ground like a nerveless sack but bounced up again, all his emotions except fear once more in full cry across his grinning face.

Andrea laid both hands on M'sungo's arm. "It wasn't his fault," she gasped. "I started to do just what you told me, White Man. You know you saw me hugging the tree. But when I heard the Day of Judgment right on top of me I—I just had to give it a run for its money!"

She dropped her head against him and sobbed. He put his arm around her and patted her awkwardly on the back. "There! There!" he said. "Don't. Please don't." Seemingly without his volition his arms drew closer and closer until he suddenly awoke to the fact that he was just plainly hugging Andrea Pellor.

He pushed her roughly from him. "Here," he said in quite a different voice, "this isn't *my* funeral. Come and cry on the elephant."

"All right," said Andrea, docilely. "How many were there? I heard a troupe—an army of them."

"You heard just one," said M'sungo.

Dabbing at her eyes with soiled fists, she followed him to the side of the fallen monarch around which were gathered the natives, a sort of glazed awe on their faces for the dead bull was a mighty tusker, carrying ivory to the value of eighty women. At M'sungo's approach their arms went up in a single gesture and from one throat they yelled, *"Bai-ye-te!"*

Scarcely had the cry of homage died away when a sound came to them through the bush that froze them into listening silence. Their faces expressed unbelief but their knowledge was insistent. It told them that they were hearing a death struggle, the whispering gush of blood from mighty lungs, mightily pierced. With a yell they broke toward that music and suddenly stopped, remembering that it is always wise with elephant to let the gun go first.

Andrea, frightened, stopped sniveling. "What is it?" she asked.

"I got two," said M'sungo apologetically. "That's the one that kept me waiting between Heaven and Hell."

"I remember. It was awful. But why did you wait? What did he have to do with it, poor dear?"

M'sungo smiled in spite of himself. "He had a great deal to do with it," he answered. "Until he started tearing the tree to pieces and took a half turn to dodge the damage, he was headed right down our trail, wasn't he?"

Andrea nodded.

"Well," continued M'sungo, kicking the mountain of flesh at his side, "just as long as he was facing us, I couldn't take the fair mark of this old boy. That's one of the bits of knowledge that has been paid for with the lives of many men. A startled elephant doesn't charge; he bolts whichever way he's headed."

He looked up and added with pardonable pride, "And that, too, is how I knew where to get him running—the other one. I made up my mind where to shoot before he was there."

They went to survey the second beast. He was quite dead; one long tusk gleaming white, an ivory island in a lake of bright blood. "Come away," said M'sungo quickly. He led her to the shade of one of the big trees where Marguerite, newly arrived, was already drowsing and dreaming happily of all the evil in the world. Around the near-by elephant, the natives swarmed like maggots.

"Bathtub!" shouted M'sungo. *"Chocula!"*

Bathtub turned lingeringly from the carcass, rushed over, dropped the lunch-box at M'sungo's feet and plunged back again. "We'll have to forgive him," said M'sungo, sitting down and proceeding to open the tin and lay out Andrea's lunch for her. "The elephant,—especially a dead one,—holds a place in the native cosmos that no white man has ever quite succeeded in grasping. All those 'boys' are quite mad. I've seen one sever his thumb from his body when he was like that and never notice it till he reeled from loss of blood."

Andrea shivered but M'sungo did not notice it. "They believe," he continued, "that the meat of elephant is a compound of the flesh of all animals and that by eating it they acquire all the leading

attributes,—the courage of the lion, the slyness of the jackal, the gorging capacity of the snake, the eyesight of the hawk by day and of the felines by night, the industry of the ant and the homing instinct of the bee. You see the line? It's endless; and just because they have more than a smattering of the qualities they seek, the superstition will never die."

He stopped to give Andrea a drink of water and to feed her a first sandwich. "And that isn't the only thing that never dies," he went on, his eyes narrowing to a peculiar look she had never seen in them before, such a look as one is apt to connect only with mystics, fanatics, ardent believers, and thoroughly out of keeping with the conception of the white man she had builded for herself.

"Why, White Man!" she cried, "what do you mean? What's come over you?"

He looked away and then back at her. "Well," he said, a quizzical gleam creeping into his eyes, "who's afraid? Why shouldn't I tell once more a thing that's been written a hundred times by greater adepts than I and never believed? It's this, Andrea Pellor. Don't set yourself too high above

the native and his worship of the greatest of beasts for he knows what you can't even believe and that is that elephants are killed, they never die. In all the centuries that blacks, Arabs and whites have padded the myriad trails of Africa, no man has ever seen or heard of an elephant dying from old age or any other natural cause."

His eyes hardened on her face. "You see?" he whispered. "You can't believe it. Elephants never die."

CHAPTER XIV

BEFORE this usually calm man's astounding fanaticism, Andrea felt the same sinking in her heart that she had known when first she had been led as a child through a telescope toward the infinite. To her, in that day and forever after, there had been nothing but terror in the thought of a universe that shrank her present world to the proportions of a pin-head. "No," she said, her eyes shifting from one comfortably animate object to another, "I don't believe it and I don't want to. I want to go home."

M'sungo sprang to his feet. "I'm sorry," he said. "I've spoiled your lunch." He gave her a leg up and taking the reins over his arm, prodded Marguerite into a somnolent perambulation. Already the swarm of natives about the elephant had increased ten-fold. From the moment she and M'sungo started they began to meet men, women and children hurrying to join in the shrill din of the butchering orgy. To each group the small personal staff that M'sungo had persuaded to accompany him by

promises of increased allotments of meat, shouted excited and exaggerated news of the kill.

"Where do they come from?" asked Andrea, wide-eyed, as contingent after contingent pressed back into the bush to let them pass.

M'sungo shrugged his shoulders. "All I can tell you," he said shortly, "is that there isn't a craal or hut within ten miles of this spot."

"Are they all from our camp?" asked Andrea.

"Not one of them," answered M'sungo. "We'll meet those later. You see, they knew in advance all about the hunt; these didn't."

"No, I don't see," said Andrea.

But M'sungo was no longer in the mood to be drawn. Leading the march home over the back trail, he set a pace that kept Marguerite at a jogging trot. Andrea protested but to no avail. M'sungo, comfortably smoking pipe after pipe, had withdrawn into one of those male havens of the mind that remain marvelously untroubled by the tongues of women. Andrea sulked.

When they arrived at the river, there being but three natives in their reduced following, M'sungo promptly took his place as one of the four pall-

bearers to Marguerite. There was something about being carried even in part by a white man that seemed to appeal to the old rogue's sense of humor. He threw up his barrel-long head and brayed an accompaniment to his triumphal progress into the scow. No sooner was he deposited than M'sungo seized his tail and bore down on it with all his weight. The music suddenly ceased.

But Andrea's clear laughter still rang out. "Oh," she cried when she could speak, "he *is* clever. I didn't realize how ridiculous you were until he laughed!" She let herself go again. M'sungo glared at her.

"And you were brutal," she continued. "You pulled his tail."

"I pulled his tail to make him shut up," said M'sungo. "I wish—" he paused.

"Say it," cried Andrea. "You wish you could make *me* shut up. Well, you can't. I'm going to laugh all I like. Listen."

She opened wide her mouth for a stage, "Ha! Ha! Ha!" but it never got out. M'sungo threw his arms around her and snatched her to him. His lips came closer and closer to hers. In his eyes

was an exasperated twinkle. "Please don't," he begged.

Andrea glanced down her nose at his lips, saw that they had halted in their advance on hers and decided to struggle free from his embrace. "Why shouldn't I?" she asked argumentatively. "What is there about this muggy old river that has you—has you bluffed?"

"A lot of things," began M'sungo, his eyes shifting.

"Oh," broke in Andrea. "I don't want to hear about the snakes and the crocs and all that again. I've digested those." She watched him shrewdly. "Tell me, White Man," she concluded, "what is the *one* reason?"

She saw a doubt and then a sudden decision come into his face. "All right," he said. "I'll tell you to-night."

They reached the home craal at the setting of the sun. In rapid succession came tea, a hot bath, fresh clothes and dinner. With the first puff at her cigarette Andrea settled back into her chair and said, "Now."

The man did not pretend to be at a loss for her

meaning. He nodded, lit his cigar and sat down. "There's only one reason," he began, "for my hesitation in telling you about the river and that is the insatiable curiosity that carries even the most sensible of women into a big danger for the sake of a very little satisfaction."

"Speaking of worn-out shibboleths—" remarked Andrea.

M'sungo looked at her steadily. "All right," he said, "I'll take your word for its being worn out and I'll trust you. Here's the cat out of the bag. I'm not the only white man in this bit of country. There's another who came in across the wilderness and has his camp about forty miles up the river. His business and mine have one thing and one thing only, thank God, in common. They are both clandestine. As it happens, I don't think he knows or cares what I'm up to but I know all about him because on those rare occasions when he comes down the river, he is invariably roaring drunk. His tongue never stops."

"Does he—ever?" asked Andrea.

"You mean does he stop here?"

She nodded.

"Yes, he does," said M'sungo. "I wish he didn't but he always does."

"And what had you intended to do with me on his first visit?" she asked.

"Well," said M'sungo, his brows puckering, "I've had in mind to tell you all about it just as I'm doing and trust you. But if it hadn't come to that, I was going to gag you and lock you up."

"Oh, were you?" said Andrea, her eyes narrowing. "Let me tell you at once that I do not consider myself under parole. I don't mean by that that I'm going to sit on the river bank waiting for this man to come along but when he comes I would be a fool to miss the chance of telling him just what my situation is. He might not be able to get me out but at least I would no longer be totally in your power. If my disappearance should be completed there would be a credible witness to the incredible fact that I had really been here."

A dark flush spread over M'sungo's face. "At the risk of further arousing your curiosity," he said, "let me assure you that you are a thousand times safer in my sole power than in that of one or a dozen MacClosters."

"Is that his name—MacCloster?" asked Andrea coldly.

M'sungo nodded.

"And what is his reprehensible business?"

"I can't conceive why I should tell you. One can't spread that sort of thing without harming one's self."

"So you don't trust me, after all," said Andrea.

"It isn't a question of trusting," replied M'sungo. "It's a question of whether it ever pays to tell tales out of school. I believe absolutely in the corroding influence of gossip. Every man and every woman feels a bit smaller after a tongue-fest."

"And you don't think you are justified in telling me this man's business just as a warning?"

"You mean," said M'sungo, "so that you can believe me when I tell you it would be a disaster should he catch a glimpse of you? In other words, you want to be persuaded that I'm telling the truth."

"Not at all," said Andrea. "You're fishing for trouble. I mean—just a warning."

"Well, if you mean just that," said M'sungo, "it is quite unnecessary, for the man is his own warning. Only see him before he sees you and I won't have

to gag you, I won't have to lock you up. I may, however, have to put the tracker on your trail into the bush."

"You think there is a man living I would run from?" said Andrea. "You don't know me."

"Perhaps you wouldn't," said M'sungo, "but in the case of MacCloster, it would be because you couldn't on account of jelly in the knees."

"Oh!" cried Andrea. "Now you *have* done it. Now I *want* to see him."

"Andrea Pellor," said M'sungo quietly, "please believe me when I tell you that you don't. I'm hoping the old devil won't go on a tear while you're here but if he does and if he comes, just remember what I tell you. Rather than have MacCloster see you and touch you, I would gladly cut your throat."

"Why mine?" asked Andrea. "It would have impressed me a lot more if you'd said your own. Perhaps you realized that I couldn't quite believe that."

"Now you're trying to quarrel," said the white man coolly. "Aren't you sleepy?"

"No."

He yawned.

"That's nice of you," said Andrea. "And since you're interested, I might as well ask a few more questions. What were you doing on that damned beach with your aeroplane, anyway? Will that be telling tales out of school?"

He looked relieved. "Not at all. I'd got off my third steamerload and I suddenly had news that put it up to me to change the captain's sailing orders before he passed beyond the reach of wireless. There wasn't time for anything but the old flying boat so I ran her out and jogged down the coast. I wasn't on that 'damned' beach more than thirty minutes, all told."

"Thirty minutes," murmured Andrea. "Who would have thought that one little half-hour could ever matter. I've always thought of half-hours as marbles—the cheap kind."

"I know," said the white man. "Five for a penny and dear at the price."

Something in the way he said it made her look up. "Do you mean marbles or half-hours?"

"Half-hours." He stared at her. "You've always been willing to risk them at that price and me—why, I've always longed for them—

thousands of them. There are so many big games to play, so little time to play them in!"

" 'So much to do, so little, et cetera,' " quoted Andrea lightly.

"Don't!" said the man sharply. "I beg your pardon," he added, "but there are a couple of things I'm a bit crazy on."

"Elephants and what else?" asked Andrea.

He looked at her musingly. "It doesn't pay to tell you things," he said finally. "We get along better just living."

"I wonder how you know!" said Andrea. "You've told me such a lot, haven't you? Where did you learn to fly?"

Her question seemed to send a shock through him but he met her eyes squarely and said nothing. Andrea waited a full minute, then she began, "Who are you? What's your name? Where did you come from? Do you always take an aeroplane along? Are you an amateur? If you're not, why do you shrivel every time I say flying-machine? Why do you?" She pounded the table.

The man's face paled and went whiter at each of her questions, but he held his tongue and his silence

maddened her. Without taking her angry eyes off his face she swept two coffee cups, two saucers and two liqueur glasses to the ground with a crash.

Nothing could have served better to break the tension. The man smiled. "That was great," he said pleasantly. "You're like me,—when in doubt, do something. Well," he continued in his lighter tone, "I can answer the spirit of all your questions and I will answer because I don't want you ever to ask them again. Stubborn pride is the root of the whole mystery. During the first year of the war I was a flyer for the Allies. I was on the way to a big name when my nerve went back on me. I couldn't believe it. I came down here and brought a machine with me, working on my old theory of contrasts. You saw how I flew—how I landed. You took me for an amateur. That's all. Please leave it. It's the flaw in my philosophy, the inevitable fly in the clear amber of a reasonably happy life."

He snapped his cigar away, sending after it a long last puff of smoke. Andrea no longer watched him. Her eyes fixed on the dying glow of the cigar butt. "I owe you several apologies," she said quietly, "but I'm not to blame. I couldn't have

guessed. I can understand some of what you feel because I've heard of several cases like yours—poor devils that look young and well but find terror in the unjust eyes of a world critical of slackers. But there was one—I remember his name. Robert Oddman Trevor, a Canadian."

That was a name that M'sungo knew best of all names in the world. It was his own. But even if Andrea had been watching him it is doubtful if she would have read correctly the sudden tensity that shot through his frame. He turned on her a slanting glance. "What about Trevor?" he asked coolly.

"It was he that really made a flyer out of my brother Harry," said Andrea. "Harry was attached to the medical board that handled the case and he said that when the ranking M. O. passed sentence in the nicest way he could but told Trevor he'd have to take a long holiday and that he would never fly again because he had lost his nerve, Trevor turned a bit white, stood very straight and said, 'You lie!' "

"Damn fool," commented M'sungo.

"Perhaps," conceded Andrea. "But there must

have been something in the way he did it that was deeper than the words because all those officers were ready on the spot to swear that what they had heard was, 'Thank you, Sir, and Harry— Well, Harry has turned out a wonder and he says it's because he always goes up on the honor of Trevor, the nerviest man that ever flew."

Andrea looked at her companion and caught on his face a light of exaltation, as though he were thinking of elephant. "Why," she cried, outraged, "you haven't been listening!"

"Oh, yes, I have," he answered promptly, coming back to earth. "Every word. Good for Harry."

Andrea studied his face, the shadow of a question in her own. "By the way," she said, "you *are* an American?"

"Sure thing," he answered, meeting her eyes squarely.

"Trevor was a Britisher, of course. But Canadians and Americans are a lot alike, aren't they?"

He contemplated his answer with a quirk of humor on his lips. "Now-a-days," he said finally, "there's no reason why we should blush over saying 'yes' to that!"

CHAPTER XV

ON the day following M'sungo received a message to the effect that his steamer had arrived and was already taking on the warehouse cargo and could do with three hundred tons more. Andrea had previously thought him a gormand for work; now she discovered a maniac.

"It's a clean-up," he declared. "In another month the rains will be here, there'll be no working in the forest, the game will scatter, the natives will want to plant. And what's more, with this cargo I'll pass the million dollar mark. That doesn't mean anything to you but it's my stake—the stake I'd set my heart on."

He took all hands off production and put them to baling and packing. From the reeds along the river he dragged to light a veritable fleet of scows. They were up-ended along the bank, scraped, calked and pitched. One after another they were floated out into waist-high water and anchored. The days were no longer enough. Every woman in the camp was set to making long, tightly bound palm-leaf

torches and the pickanins from eight years up were organized into squads to light the night shift through the short hours of darkness. M'sungo took his sleep, if he took any, leaning against a tree near the nest of hand-pressure baling-machines.

These machines were his own invention and the source of much pride and comfort. They were sliding boxes of sheet iron, placed end to end in sets of five. At one extremity they were anchored solidly, at the other end was a block and tackle made fast to any convenient tree and attached to a thin wire rope which passed through the length of the tier, carrying with it a false end to each box. These were packed as tightly with fiber as trampling feet could fill them; then a long, grooved cover was clamped on and the crew sent to the ropes.

It was a rough enough system but it worked. Out of each box came a block of fiber just the size and weight of a man's full load, tightly wired and dense enough to shed any moisture short of a drenching. All hands were kept steadily at this work until it was completed. At its finish, when all the available material was stacked along the edge of the forest in great oblong piles that looked like newly cut timber, M'sungo gave a great spread.

To each ten men was allotted a tin of marmalade; to each twenty a box of crackers, a sack of flour, one load of salt and a demijohn of cheap but sound wine. Andrea watched this wholesale depletion of the white man's stores and began to wonder. As she wondered, her heart went way up and then way down. Was this the beginning of another end? Was she sorry or was she glad? She looked back on the few days of her new life and they seemed already to have stretched into years. She was too young or too careless to have learned that time passes swiftly only to those who are in a rut of daily routine, dragging tragically under the blows of sorrow and almost forgetting itself entirely when joys are various.

She was astounded to think now how free her mind had grown from worries over the irrevocable; each thing she did had become merely the natural thing as though all actions in that camp were in some manner allied with the plain, straightforward thoughts and speech of its master. Under the impulse of the sign of a general break-up, she awoke to her old consciousness as though from a long and pleasant trance. Her heart grew heavy within her.

M'sungo was too busy to pay much heed to her but so great was his silent elation when the long strings of bellowing and splashing carriers began to load the barges, heaping each to incredible heights, that she caught it and, unrebuked, passed long hours on the river bank watching black after black plunge waist high into the croc-infested waters.

"Why aren't they afraid?" she asked.

"No reason to be," said M'sungo shortly. "There are only two things that a croc really minds: one is a bullet through the spine and the other is noise."

The day came when the last of the barges, towing a little scow stacked with an overflow remnant of bales, was despatched and M'sungo could take a long breath and turn his attention to putting the camp in order. This in itself was no small task. All branches, chips, bark, refuse and other rubbish consequent upon the work in the forest was gathered and burned. Then, as squad after squad of laborers left for home and the planting, their grass huts, scattered without the limits of the permanent craal, were also set on fire.

"Within a week of the first rains," said M'sungo to a listless Andrea, "the wilderness will have re-

turned altogether to its own to all outward appearance. Three weeks after that, any one penetrating to the clearing we have made will find nothing beyond a flourishing shamba or corn patch, the very natural property of the craal."

Long since, the wounded aeroplane had been wheeled into its hangar, a large shed roughly constructed of corrugated iron. The baling boxes and the rest of the sparse machinery and implements connected with the fiber industry were now greased and stored in this warehouse to be buried later under heaps of corn. At the same time that M'sungo was overseeing these operations, he was occupied with settling his accounts with the long-term workers and in squaring up certain large loose-leaf ledgers to which he attached considerable importance for they contained the history of a simple but great enterprise. Andrea found this period unusually monotonous. She did her best to keep her spirits up and perhaps would have succeeded had it not been for a rainy day.

There is something about the brazen glare of the tropics that robs life of sharp edges, diminishes the soul from its paramount proportion as the prime

factor of existence and cradles it in the warm embrace of the passing moment. Under a glaring sky all angles of character melt and living is reduced to a sensitive yet unthinking slumberous emotion. But let rain, unceasing rain, beat down from the suddenly overladen heavens for a few hours at a stretch and flesh recedes, the mind awakes, the soul comes into its tortured own. In an hour, almost the twinkling of an eye, the memory of bright skies is blotted out as though forever.

On such a night of downpour Andrea sat in her room, hands crossed upon a discarded book in her lap and eyes widely fixed on some point of focus far beyond the encircling walls of her hut. She was frightened, for her soul had come to talk with her and there was no escape. She could not phone up a taxi and a party of four and go to a show and supper afterwards, thus losing the uninvited guest.

She measured the shallow depths of the widespread illusion to the effect that it is the guilty conscience that lives in terror of meeting face to face its own soul. Nothing could be further from the psychological truth. The guilty conscience thrives and fattens on such encounters for it finds in them

the stimulus of endless contention and the unfailing solace of concentration. Not so the mind unburdened with knowledge of offense; confronted with its idle monitor it can only cry, "What on earth is there to talk about? The sight of you bores me. *Please* go away."

And Andrea's soul wouldn't go! It sat there, staring vaguely this way and that, and presenting an altogether sorry figure. In the first place, it was rather undersized and distinctly undeveloped; in the second, it was insufficiently clad, even for a spirit, and seemed to shrink and shrivel at the mere thought of getting out into the rain. It realized that she was right; it had nothing whatever to say to her and into its wizened face came a look of self-commiseration at the thought that Andrea was entirely to blame for its own flabbiness. How could a trainer who was never called upon even for a massage treatment be expected to keep in trim?

That look on its face exasperated Andrea. She got up from her chair and undressed rapidly. When it came to putting on her pajamas, hot tears rushed to her eyes. Her heart swelled in hopeless rebellion. She didn't want pajamas to-night. She wanted one of her own dearest nighties; soft crêpe de chine

with a maidenly narrow border of lace insertion run through with fresh blue baby ribbon! She looked at her cot and rebelled at that, too. She wanted her own bed with its lovely linen, her own room with its curtained windows and its gleam of mahogany and chintz under the dying glow of an open fire!

With a childish gesture of despair, she crept into bed, curled up with her face against the pillow and wept. The more she cried, the more it rained; the more it rained, the more she cried. There was no end to that—no end—no— Sleep did its best to take and hold her but to-night its grip was uncertain and long before morning it saw defeat coming and made a dastardly retreat.

Andrea awoke, not slowly, not swimming up to consciousness through drowsy gradations, but suddenly with a snapping of the eyes wide open on a great emptiness. She was alone, terribly alone, and hopelessly awake. She lay staring up at the uncheerful lantern that she had purposely left burning. Its chimney was smoked. Through its veil the flames stared at her out of a single baleful red eye. Outside, rain still poured.

She decided to cry a little more and found she

couldn't. Tears had withdrawn before an ineffectual rage. Her face hardened. Well, if she couldn't cry, something must happen; if not on its own, then it must be forced. She wondered what the white man was doing. Perhaps he was sound asleep; perhaps he was even snoring! What did she know about this man, anyway? Was he human? Had he live points of contact or was he an impalpable creation of her sick brain? Perhaps she wasn't here at all! If she screamed, would Aunty Gwen come running in or— Her eyes, following the sequence of her thoughts, fell upon the barred door.

She arose, put on her slippers and her bathrobe, walked deliberately to the door, grasped the bar with two trembling hands and threw it up with all her strength. The clang of the far-away gong rang out above the din of the droning rain. Following it instantly came the thud of a falling chair. The door, released, swung slowly open with a long-drawn creak of unoiled hinges. Andrea was suddenly frightened. She shrank back against the wall of the hut, gathered the two loose braids of hair that hung over her shoulders and crushed them to her, as though to smother the loud beating of her heart.

Coming through the covered way she could hear the swift crush of hurrying steps. M'sungo, fully dressed, shot into the center of her room and whirled. In his hands, held at the hip, finger on trigger, was a villainous sawed-off shotgun. Only his long training to look twice before he fired saved Andrea when his eyes brought him the startling conviction that besides himself she was the only other living thing in the room. She stared at him, wide-eyed and trembling. She saw his figure, keyed to one sort of combat, relax only to grow slowly tense again. He turned, laid the shotgun aside and came toward her with swift sure strides. For an instant his eyes wavered but as he drew nearer they steadied to transfix and hold her pinned against the wall.

She felt herself struggling as against an unjust accusation. Under her trembling hands, her heart beat with great irregular throbs. A lump rose in her throat and it seemed as though it must strangle her if she did not let it out. In her desperation she hurled herself forward, threw her arms about M'sungo's neck, pressed her face against him and sobbed.

"Oh, White Man," she gasped, "I was so lonely,—I am so lonely!"

The embrace of a woman is one thing; the clinging of a child quite another. The sternness in M'sungo's eyes died suddenly; the hard look in his face faded, vanished and gave place to one of great tenderness. He gathered Andrea up in his arms and carried her quickly through the covered way. He told himself there was every reason to hasten, for he could feel her soft warm body, shaken with sobs, wrapping itself round his heart and crushing it beyond repair. He laid her on the couch in his room, made a nest for her in the many pelts with which it was covered, pillowed her head in a bundle of furs and drew over her a gaily figured sarong.

"You were cold," he said, as he tucked her in; then he knelt beside her, took her hand in both of his and suddenly laid his face in her open palm, still moist with her tears.

CHAPTER XVI

ANDREA drew a long whimpering sigh and nestled down against the warm furs. Her eyes gazed impersonally and a little wonderingly at M'sungo's bowed head; then they wandered about the room. She had never been in it before; with the coming of the rain her own veranda had been quickly transformed into a weather-proof dining-room. So this was where he had lived and worked during many months! It was a bachelor's room, arranged at once for comfort, utility and sloth. On one side was his cot, permanently enclosed in mosquito netting and having at its head a lantern for reading in bed. Next to it, came a high draughtsman's desk roughly made of packing cases. On each end of it, guttering candles, still lighted, rose from mysterious pedestals, empty bottles, disguised under cascades of molten wax.

In the shadow of the high desk stood the one utterly incongruous bit of furniture, a glistening mahogany phonograph. Andrea's eyes passed it and then went back to linger for an instant in vague

wonder. Why had M'sungo never brought it out? Never played it? She was not interested enough to ask aloud. The floor was completely covered with grass mats and on these were scattered many untanned skins, hair-side up. There were the two wicker chairs, the couch and a much worn Bombay Take-it-easy with its extension arms opened at the angle at which the white man's tired legs had last returned into general circulation the blood shaken down into them by much walking.

Built into the wainscotting of reeds were many pegs upon which were hung a small collapsible book-case, articles of clothing, guns, water-canteens, helmets and hats, all ready to the eye and hand. On the high desk lay scattered the ledger leaves upon which M'sungo had been working at the sounding of the gong; before it, legs in air, was an overturned chair.

Andrea's eyes finished their slow circuit of the room and came back to the white man's bowed head. He had not moved and she herself had lain very still, more through languor than by volition. She had been in that state of subdued consciousness which sweeps troubled humanity back to the border-

land of childhood, but now her mind awoke. A deep flush stained her neck and crept up through her cheeks, carrying with it to her eyes a look of sudden age. Her hand, imprisoned under the man's cheek, doubled and contracted into a hard little fist. He looked up quickly and saw the transition that had come to her face. "Don't give in to it," he said, throwing one arm across her knees. "Don't give in to age. Do you think I am so blind that I don't know where I found you? Why do you think I am on my knees? It's in reverence before the glimpse that I caught of the girlhood of Andrea Pellor. My arms are trembling because they have dared to carry her clean youth, soft and warm as it was before the touch of the world and years and my heart is aching with a memory that will never die."

"White Man," said Andrea, her face unsoftened, "would you pay three pounds for me?"

He stared at her, leaped to his feet and started pacing up and down beside the couch, a look of thunder on his brow. "No," he said, "I wouldn't." Without looking at her he went to the bookcase and after a moment drew out a worn volume; then he placed a chair close to the couch so that the light

of the lantern would fall over his shoulder, sat down and began to read aloud.

For a moment there was a puzzled look on Andrea's face, then it cleared and she laughed, not merrily. He was reading from Grimm's fairy tales. He paid no attention to her interruption; his voice went on and on. He was a master-reader. Without undue inflection, with never a hitch, the words and the story seemed to flow through him as though he himself were far away living in the tale.

Very gradually the hardened and cheapened look in Andrea's eyes died out. They grew wide again and dwelt dreamily on the man's slim figure. She saw many things about him she had never noted before. His hair was crisp and touched with premature gray at the temples; his shoulders were broad and his hips very narrow. He had a good "boot leg" but his feet were small enough to preserve balance even there. In spite of his height, he was well-knit by grace of the life he had led.

"He is very strong," thought Andrea as she remembered how lightly he had swung her into his arms. Then she began to think of other things about him. He never was too tired to shave before

the evening meal. He had shown an almost uncanny tact in foreseeing and preventing the embarrassing situations that one would have thought inevitable under the circumstances of their life together. He never forgot. He had called her "my dear girl" once and she had shown that she hated it. It was enough.

"How old are you, White Man?" she asked.

"Thirty-four, normally," he answered instantly, and went on with his absorbing reading almost without a break.

Andrea fell silent, even her thoughts stopped talking. Gradually the flowing voice possessed her, picked her up lightly, bore her away and away. She floated through a wonderful country, between banks that were carpeted with green and crowned with a thousand poppies, all nodding and swaying under the featherweight of gnomes at play. In other words, she slept as children sleep when put to bed in the good old way.

When she awoke, hours later, the room was heavy with the acrid smell of lanterns burned too low but to make up for that, the rain had ceased and sunlight poured in through the open door. M'sungo

was sitting as he had sat, reading as he had been reading. The flow of his voice was exactly the same as though he himself had been caught in a current that would not let him stop.

Andrea drew a quivering breath. She saw instinctively the workings of his mind. He wished her to awake without awaking,—to come to the new day with the selfsame smile in her heart that had been there when she slept. He called upon her to play the game through and she decided to do it. She stretched her bare arms, yawned, rubbed her eyes with doubled fists, laughed and then threw out both hands to him.

"Take me back," she said.

The book fell from his hands. He turned and stared at her with the hungry eyes of a man who sees for the first time one of the rarest of God's creatures,—namely, a woman whose youth stands by her in the disheveled morning, defies the ugly finger of gross slumber and proclaims her lovely beyond the limits set by the wrinkling seams of coarser and less blessed fabrics. For a moment his gaze wavered as though before too strong a light, then it steadied and his face grew stern. He arose.

"Come on," he said.

She threw her arms about his neck; he picked her up, sarong and all, and passed solemnly the length of the covered way. He could feel her face pressed hard against his shoulder and her loosened hair was like a cloud beneath his chin. Her arms clung to him tightly, her body trembled, her eyes twinkled and her lips murmured audibly, "Remember, Andrea Pellor, you're just a kiddie."

He dropped her on her cot with a thud that surprised the six straddling legs of that sturdy campaigner into strident protest and incidently startled one young lady.

"There you are, you little devil," he growled and strode from the room with the satisfied air of a dog who has just carried home eight pounds of prime roast intact.

Andrea watched him go, then she arose, took the cord from her bathrobe and advanced upon the door to the covered way. She closed it, let down the bar and with the cord bound it in place. She tied knot after hard knot and as she drew each one of them tight she said, "Just to give you time to think twice, Andrea Pellor."

CHAPTER XVII

SCARCELY had she finished when a sudden languor seized her. She knew that she ought to bathe and dress quickly for M'sungo would be keen for his breakfast after his "white" night. Why did all Latins call a sleepless night "white" anyway? Her brows puckered over that problem and it seemed as though she must puzzle it out before she did anything else. She crept into her cot to attend to it. A cold wave swept over her body and left it frozen; a pain stabbed into her side.

The pain was like a knife, red-hot. It terrified her. In an instant her tongue was parched, her eyes were burning. So suddenly had sickness come upon her that even in the face of its clamoring presence, her mind declared it incredible. Surely it would pass swiftly as it had come. She clenched her teeth and waited. There was a look in her face as though she listened.

The pain ceased. When it came back again it was no longer a knife but the raving fangs of a wolf tearing their way toward the vitals of her body.

She tried to clench her teeth, to keep silence until the spasm passed but she could not hold out. "White Man!" she moaned and then, realizing that she must make him hear now or never, she gathered all her strength and screamed.

She heard quick steps coming from the craal, a thundering on her door and then his voice, "Am I to come in?"

She tried to cry out again and could not; tears poured down her cheeks. But the white man did not wait; another moment and he was standing over her twisted body. She looked up. The stricken look in her frightened eyes was as nothing to the sudden terror that had come into his own. He sank to his knees. "You are ill?" he breathed.

He passed his cool hand across her forehead, held his fingers to the pulse in her throat, grasped her wrists and found them burning,—all burning. "Last night," he said, "when you were in here, you didn't use your curtain? You left the light on?"

She did not answer beyond a stare from glassy eyes. Her face was white, her lips a straight purple line. Her shoulders were rigid but beneath them her body was twisting and turning as though in a

desperate effort to tear itself away from the sentient seat of pain.

"Is it as bad as that?" said M'sungo. Into his voice had already come the calm of a man accustomed to the face of danger. "I'm going to leave you for a moment," he continued. "When I come I'll take the pain away."

He stepped toward the barred door and tried to open it. So intent was he on getting to his room that he glanced at the cord and saw only that it was hindering him. He drew out his knife, cut the bar free and hurried on. The three minutes he was gone seemed an eternity to Andrea. When he came back he carried in one hand a medicine case and in the other a hypodermic syringe already filled. He set the case down carefully, grasped and bared Andrea's forearm, rubbed it with alcohol and quickly gave her an injection. "Skip the next five minutes," he said. "Fasten your mind to five minutes from now." She only moaned to show that she heard him.

But even before the five minutes were up she could feel peace coming to her body slowly and from far away as though it feared to pounce upon her

suddenly. When it settled upon her it brought with it a drowsy and ineffable relief. Her eyes could move once more in their sockets. They followed the white man as he made his rapid preparation for a long siege. She heard him call Bathtub and issue a string of orders; then he brought a chair close to the cot and sat down.

"Andrea," he said quietly, "we're up against it, you and I. I can't say just what it is. It may be ptomaine, you may have been sickening for appendicitis, but I'm almost afraid it isn't either of those. If it's fever, it is pernicious." Her eyes stared at him, hung upon his face.

He took one of her hands in his. "I'm breaking all the rules by frightening you," he went on, "and I do it purposely. I do it because I've learned that you and I are brothers in one thing. We're fighters. All the blood in our veins flows one way,—up-hill to battle. We don't know when to quit. No damned fever can show us where to get off. It's going to be shoulder to shoulder and if you go back on me, I'll go back on God, for I trust you as I've never trusted any living thing."

Her hands twisted in his and gripped his fingers.

"You're great, White Man," she said softly. "You're like that,—a fighter,—and it's sweet of you to ring me in. No damned fever can show you—no damned—" She crumpled up and cried.

"Good for you," said M'sungo promptly, "cry now. It can't do you a bit of harm and it will probably put you to sleep. But when you wake, if you want to cry then, please come up crying mad and ready to set your teeth in the throat of pain. For he'll have you, Kiddie, he'll have you in a half-Nelson and I can't always stick him with the needle."

It was even as he said. All day and all night the battle raged and there were moments when Andrea forgot that she was a fighter, begged with gasping, heartrending moans for opium and relief and when he refused, her tongue turned bitter, sharp as a serpent's tooth. Each word she said, was chosen to wound. Herself the most fair-minded of women, she became unjust, ungenerous and cruel as dead love.

That was while she still had strength. At such moments M'sungo felt himself on the verge of a mad act. He would leap to his feet and stride up and down, his fists clenched at his sides, his face

white, his mind caught in a whirl of torturing doubt. The old problem of values seized upon his brain and tormented it. What was worth while? How much could one give out in agony for life and still hope to pay the debt to self? But when through the hours she grew weak and weaker, that was a thousand times worse. The light went altogether from her eyes yet they lived and living accused him in silence of horrible things,—of things so terrible that they lurked in that deep shadow of the mind which is beyond the ken of words.

He had nursed people before, he had seen men die, casual friends and once a faithful servant, but nothing like this had ever before come to him. It was as if this girl, this stranger, were flesh of his flesh, body of his body. He felt in himself the tortured reflection of each of her torments as though, transcending the barrier of sex, he had stolen a memory of motherhood and travail.

He was giving her the treatment for pernicious malaria. Together with every other white man who has served apprenticeship to Africa he had an extraordinary store of rough and ready medical knowledge. To such men only six drugs are essential, all

others being classed as furbelows of the pampered sick room, and with these they work as with elementals. Kill or cure is their motto, the saving idea being that if the patient can't stand punishment, he would go under in any case.

The trouble with M'sungo was that he knew so well his shortcomings. Each time he measured out a dose, his hand trembled as though it had never gambled before and each time he cursed his ignorance and in the same breath prayed for guidance; but, nevertheless, he fought steadfastly against the continual pressure of a desire to ease up, to be fatally merciful.

On those rare occasions when Andrea's spasms conquered his reluctance to use the needle he would watch her until the opiate stilled her and then fall into his chair and to sleep. "I am here," he would say even as his lids closed. "Never forget I'm here for you. Touch me or speak to me and I'll awake." It was true. In spite of his long vigil he kept deep slumber at a distance by an effort of the will like a man who sets a clock in his mind and trusts to his subconscious self to call him at the hour marked.

The afternoon of the second day found Andrea

unusually subdued and still but he was not deceived. He looked at her eyes and saw that their pupils still appeared convex and glassy like the eyes of a fish. They stared at him with an immeasurable gravity. When her dry lips parted, he shrank even before she spoke.

"I wish you would go away," she said quietly. "I don't like to look at you; I don't wish you to look at me. I will be glad if I never see you again. There is no one in the world that I wish ever to see again. Please send me that nigger, Bathtub. If I must have some one I would rather have him."

He arose, called Bathtub and made him squat on the floor where her eyes could quickly find him; then he went to the door behind her and stood for a long time looking out across the glaring craal. The rays of the sun descended on that beaten space with an almost audible contact. The leaves of the acacias were shriveled; not a woman or a child was visible and even the fowls crowded close in the shadows of the eaves.

He took one step out and looked up into the bowl of blue. His tired eyes searched it from horizon to zenith and back to the hot level of the earth. It was

empty. Its hollow infinity pressed down upon his breast with a measureless weight. He had come out for a parley, remonstrance on his lips, but he had forgotten that in the tropics God walks only at night.

He turned, went back to his post and sat down, dismissing Bathtub with a nod. Andrea's eyes were still fixed in a lightless stare. Presently she began to speak. "You bring me here, you let me fall ill, you shame my body. You are like the men that strap down little dogs and open them. You are like that. You have been staring at my heart, at my bare lungs and all the unnamable beastly things inside of me. You leave me alone with a nigger—when I'm torn open. I don't hate you. You are nothing."

Her voice went on for a long time. He dropped his face in his hands but he did not try to stop his ears. They listened to all she said, they told him she was suffering as he had known no one ever to suffer before. Her spirit spoke from beyond pain. In that hour he learned a great truth. Pain is a wall, a barrier. So far and no farther can flesh go and still hold to the memories, the fears and affec-

tions of every-day life. Beyond that barrier is a void where love itself is a stranger, where life and death are one and equally of no account.

He did not know when he fell asleep or when her voice ceased but on awakening such a silence met him as struck his heart cold. She was still,—still as death. Night had fallen but he was unaware of darkness. He felt that never again would he need light or eyes or air to breathe. He was cold as though the sun in setting had slipped down and out beyond any rising. He leaned over and put his face close to her lips. They were parted. Her hand was lying outside the coverlet. He took it up gently. It was warm and moist. She was sleeping.

He drew erect, his body tense in the first realization of a great and overwhelming relief; then his spirit melted within him and his nerves relaxed from the long hard strain. His limbs crumpled, his head nodded and fell forward, lower and lower until, one arm outstretched, he lay with his face half buried in the covers of the cot. When again he awoke, the sun had changed its mind and come back; day was streaming across the floor in a single band of

light; but he did not stir. On his head he felt Andrea's hand and in his ears was the lingering caress of her voice. "Lots of good it did to tell you to go away, White Man," she was murmuring. "You came back. You brought me back. White Man, I love you a little."

CHAPTER XVIII

"AND I you," breathed M'sungo. He slipped to his knees, took both her hands in his and looked into her eyes as though he could never take his fill of the sanity that had come back to them.

"Andrea Pellor," he went on, "before you have time to think about it I want to tell you that you and I can never feel shame again. I want you to know that no man, however mean or tarnished by life, could do the intimate things that I have done for you and will still have to do, without feeling the pangs of a love that is rooted outside the limits of passion."

He dropped his eyes as though before a confessional. "Until I saw you quite helpless, until I saw you pass to the other side of pain, I didn't know that I had a heart. I had a strange conception of love as a thing that you give generously to dogs, sparingly to men and never to women except as a last surrender to the unknown."

He paused; Andrea smiled faintly. "And now?" she prompted.

"Now,—" he answered. "Now I know that a man must travel far beyond the limits of every-day emotions to come up with love itself. He may find content and browsy happiness in some woman possessed of all the qualities that command affection but love itself dwells far beyond at the crossroads of weakness and strength. In the book of great truths it is written that anything ultimate is strong—immutable. And so your helplessness, carried to that last degree, has wound itself around my heart with a grip that will never loosen."

"Poor White Man!" said Andrea.

"Whether you want me," he continued gravely, "or mock me, whether you are true or untrue, pure or impure,—all those things no longer matter, for love is an integral possession. You may leave me, put the width of the world between us, and the breath of your body will still be the breath of mine, the surge of your blood will be the surge of mine, your sins will be my sins, because your helpless self, stripped of all the clogs of flesh, has twined itself for always with the fibers of my heart."

"So you *would* give three pounds for me," murmured Andrea.

"Whether you want me," he continued gravely, "or mock me——"

He let go her hands and rose quickly to his feet. "You are stronger than I thought," he said. "No, I'll never give a cent for you. I'll wait till you're well and then I'll take you in free fight and in my own way."

But Andrea did not hear him; she had sunk back lax into her pillows. Two tears crept from under her closed eyelids and down her hollow cheeks. "I'm so weak," she whispered, "so weak I can't cry."

The white man cursed himself aloud. No one knew better than he that all is not won when the tide of battle turns and that he who sleeps on the verge of victory awakes to defeat. He settled down to the long vigilance that was his price of peace. The day and a night came and went before he could draw the long, quivering breath of relief that marked the passing of danger.

During the stage of convalescence he read and talked to her by the hour, but the time came when she would have no more of the printed page. He had spoken a passage here and there from the book of his own life and now she demanded the volume from cover to cover. He told her of his boyhood in

a New England country town, of scrapes in school and of the disaster in college that had turned him from the narrow road of specialization in the diseases of the nose and ear to that broad highway which is trod lightly and aimlessly by stray dogs and citizens of the world.

"You would have made a great physician," said Andrea, almost regretfully.

"Perhaps," he replied. "But I wouldn't have saved myself. I would never have found myself. I would have been one of those unconscious mortals who spend their lives in a group picture. I would never have found out that there is something within me that utterly rebels against all those isms which aim at the collective classification of animal man and whose goal is the herd instead of the individual."

"Shsh!" said Andrea playfully, "aren't you afraid to speak so loud?"

"No," said the white man, his brows drawn in concentration. "The fight is on; why bother? There's a war coming that will be superimposed on these struggles of munitions and commerce, a war of the awakened minds of men. On one side you will have organized humanity as the fungus on

work; on the other will stand the 'contemptible little army' of those who still believe that all labor is nothing but an expression,—the expression of the individual. We don't have to really fight to win; we only need learn to live and learning, teach. That's the keynote of all legitimate individualism; knowledge of life in control of materialism."

"But isn't that old stuff?" asked Andrea, yawning for the first time in many days.

"No, it isn't," said the white man thoughtfully, "and I'll tell you why. Never for centuries has intrinsic life been so close as it is to-day to its true level of proportionate valuation. What was worth living for yesterday, isn't a justification to-day. Food, raiment and a baby-grand measure less in the thoughts of true men than do truth, honor and the final quality of mercy." He sat for long in an absorbed silence.

"Tell me," said Andrea finally, "how the production of a million dollars' worth of fiber is an expression of the individual."

"Now you're trying to pull down the star to which I've hitched my personal wagon," said M'sungo with his slow smile. "Well," he continued, "take it,

handle it, but let it go again when you're through with it because I need it high up and far ahead. When I realized that that M. O. wasn't a liar after all—"

"White Man!" broke in Andrea and leaned forward. She stared at him wide-eyed and flushed of cheek. "Are you Trevor?"

He nodded.

"Robert Oddman Trevor?'

"Robert Trevor," he confirmed and simplified.

"Oh, White Man!" she cried again, dropping her hands into her lap and gazing at him with an intensity that slowly drove the blood from her face. She was sitting in her hammock-chair, propped against all the pillows the camp could produce. She took a long breath and then she spoke again. "Will you do something for me,—a little thing?"

"Why ask?" said Trevor.

"Well, it's like this," said Andrea. "I want to kiss you." She turned her eyes from his face and continued rapidly. "It needn't mean anything, of course. Nothing binding, you know, on either party. Only, you see, anything might happen to me at any moment; I might fall ill again and just pop

off. So,—if you don't mind,—I'd like to do it now, please."

Trevor's face presented a puzzle that nobody saw, for Andrea's eyes were anywhere but upon it. He arose and came hesitatingly to kneel beside her chair. "Well," he said and she almost laughed at the weird quaver in his voice, "here I am. G—go to it."

She put her arms around his neck and came blindly toward him. "Andrea," he protested, "aren't you going to look in my eyes?"

She shook her head. "No," she whispered, "it isn't that kind of a kiss."

Her soft moist lips on his mouth were as light as a flower that sways to its mate in the cool breath of the morning, salutes gently and recedes, fearful of bruising.

"There!" she cried, sinking back on her pillows. "Now go on about the star thing."

Trevor, a dazed look in his eyes, mopped his brow, returned to his chair and obediently repeated, "When I realized that that M. O. wasn't a liar after all and that my flying days were really over, I had to look around for new steering lights. There are just three things in the world to-day: winning the

war is number one and after that come education and transport."

He nodded to himself as if in confirmation. "I picked Transport for my star. My mission is to ships and railroads. I believe in all reverence that together with education they can be welded into the second coming of Our Lord, bearing peace and not a sword. If you can only see my star high enough and far enough away, you'll know that it shines on a world beyond blasphemy."

He looked at her anxiously, as though he feared she might stay among the shallows while he was trying to show her his depths. She nodded. "Go on."

"Beginnings," he continued, "always look small measured against ambition's end, so I don't often look so far ahead. Just now my eyes are fixed right here, on this soil of Africa, because from her overflowing breast I've drawn my stake of a million. That's a bit mixed but it's clear, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Andrea. "Go on."

"Another thing that is written in the book of great truths, which, by the way, is the primer of the citizens of the world," continued Trevor, "is the

axiom that success begins at the point where a man stops asking for favors and starts giving them. You'll get the connection when I remind you that the possessor of a million of anything can always give favors."

"A whole cotillion," agreed Andrea.

"Having a million," he went on, "I shall have no difficulty in building a railroad across Africa with other people's money and having built one I shall build another and then another. To put it in a nutshell I might say that from now on all my prayers will be stated in terms of miles of road-bed,—what you English call permanent way. Other and greater men have built empires; I should like to knit them together."

"When are you going to start?" asked Andrea.

"I've started already," answered Trevor. "I've got my stake and a steamer besides; that's pure velvet now-a-days."

"I'll tell you when you really started," said Andrea. "The moment you connected your inner flame with the star of Transport."

"You're coming on," said Trevor, pleased at her remembering.

"And why," said Andrea, "have you never once played the phonograph?"

"Eh!" exclaimed Trevor, his mind turning a somersault. "Look here," he protested, "are you trying to bowl me over with my own philosophy of contrasts? What the devil has the phonograph got to do with stars and inner flames? The damned thing isn't mine,—that's why I never use it. It's tainted by its prospective ownership."

"MacCloster," mused Andrea aloud. Her eyes flashed a smile at him. "Well, anyway, I know it's going to be awfully jolly."

"What? The phonograph."

"No, silly. Building railroads."

CHAPTER XIX

FROM that day Andrea's health began to mend with tremendous rapidity. Trevor never tired of watching her; never ceased to wonder at a recovery so rapid that its daily transitions were visible. It reminded him of one of the marvels of his boyhood. An old man had said to him one dawn, "Hear the corn growing, sonny?" and he laughed, whereupon the granddad had taken him by one ear and marched him to the nearest furrow. "Pick out a stalk and watch it, you little egg-sucker," he commanded. "See it grow, if you can't hear."

Andrea was like that; she was unfurling as though in the morning of a new youth. Never had her eyes been brighter, never her cheeks so quick to play with fire. Incidentally, she was full of a devil of mischievous reminiscent innuendo.

"It's all a great joke now, young lady," Trevor would defend himself, "but if you'd seen what I have of pernicious malaria, you'd keep grave for a year. I've seen three Swahilis that had nourished mosquitoes from their youth up, fall like logs, one

after another, within a mile and a half of an infected camp and the best of them went stone blind for a month."

"Did you nurse them, White Man? Did you see them through?"

These were the questions that drove him nearest to desperation, but the gleam in the eyes above the demure mouth from which they issued invariably warned him of the trap in time. He was on his guard; he knew that there were things between him and Andrea that speech would turn into ghastly skeletons walking by day and which only consistent silence could entomb. But so deep had grown his sympathies that even in this he understood her. It was not that she was perverse but that her pride demanded a constant test of his loyalty to her other self,—that internal self that had lain bared, revealed and helpless in his arms.

About those things which might have aroused a legitimate curiosity, she asked few questions. Without a word of inquiry she saw him despatch twelve picked men on some mysterious mission whose intricacies and importance necessitated a preliminary palaver of an hour's duration. Equally silent, she

watched his detailed preparations of a well-appointed safari. Tents were brushed and set to air; cots and mattresses put out for a sun-bath; provisions of all sorts packed in one-load cases; water boiled, filtered and hung in canvas coolers. Only a few days before, just such signs as these had made her heart heavy with unanswerable questionings but her illness had changed all that. The successive moments of the throbbing present each in its turn filled her whole horizon.

When all was apparently ready, Trevor settled down deliberately to wait and still Andrea held her tongue as to such things as mattered,—things that sooner or later would have to swim to the surface between them or drown forever. Her silence began to tell on his nerves. She could see it in little things, in the furtive glances he cast her way, in his interminable smoking, his restless and aimless moving about the craal and in the long pauses with which he met her chatter, as though he waited for some curious word that would give him an opening.

She knew instinctively that he had something big up his sleeve and that he would shake it out on the slightest provocation. She also had a long memory

and had no difficulty in recalling his exact boast as to what he would do when she were well. He was going to take her in free fight. She was well now, she reflected; she had never felt better in her life and if there was one thing she hungered for more than another it was the promised combat.

Her studied and selective silence almost dazed Trevor with the realization that he was up against one of the rare strategists of the age. He was like a wrestler, practised in hand-holds and many deadly tricks where his opponent is accommodating but who circles in vain around a stolid antagonist whose pose says, "No preliminaries! Keep off or go to the mat!"

There is no telling how long Andrea's innate stubbornness would have held out nor at what point Trevor's exasperation would have driven him to dive for a body hold, for their wordless contest was interrupted by an event which he had both foreseen and feared. They were sitting at table after dinner on a cloudless night, brilliant under a full moon, when a far-away sound came to disturb their purposeful silence. Trevor straightened in his chair and leaned forward, his whole body tense in the ef-

fort of listening. It came again, a ghost of a sound that gradually assumed substance and rhythmic form until after five long minutes it was recognizable as the cadenced rumble of an African river chantey.

Instantly Trevor was on his feet. He issued orders to Bathtub who immediately began to clear the table and eliminate every item of furniture that would indicate a dual occupancy of the white portion of the camp. They had dressed that night for dinner, not as a celebration of any special event but because they were both bored with too much time on their hands. Trevor now excused himself to Andrea and withdrew to his room. In a few minutes he reappeared garbed in his roughest khaki shirt and trousers. His face was grave as he advanced on Andrea with a nod toward her hut. "MacCloster will be here in half an hour," he stated. "I ask you to go to your room, close and bar both doors and stay there until I call you."

Without waiting for her comment he turned and left her. She sat on, with narrowed eyes, until she had finished her cigarette and then, with a glance around to see if Trevor were watching, she arose

and walked slowly across the open court of the craal. In her breast was a great rebellion at the curt manner in which he had made his request, but she had to admit to herself that no other form of address, coming from him, could have impressed her so deeply, moved her so quickly.

She went to her room, closed the front door but did not bar it, chose a book and sat down to make a pretense of reading. The sound of the chantey rumbled near and then wavered afar according to the bends of the river but in spite of this variation the sum of its volume swelled steadily in an ominous approach until it died quite suddenly at the boat-landing.

There was a distant rattle of a dozen punting-poles dropped across the thwarts, a spoken word or two that carried marvelously across the still night, and then a long silence suddenly shattered by a bellowing voice. "Ship ahoy! Show your port and starboard lights, damn you. How in the hell d'you think I'll make the channel?"

Andrea rose quickly and laid her ear to a crack in the door. Her pulse was beating fast but she was smiling. She heard Trevor come out and pres-

ently she heard him speak. His voice was almost unrecognizable, it was so cold and so incisive, like sharpened steel. In strange incongruity, the words he let fall were like drops of molten metal.

"Hello, MacCloster, you dirty, drunken brute! What's your price to go away from here to-night? I can offer you a case of Bols and all the kaffir dogs in the craal to see you off."

The words and their manner astounded Andrea; for a moment it seemed to her that these two men must be joking. Then she felt the impact of an undercurrent of malevolence such as she had never in her life imagined, much less encountered. She quivered to the thought that here was Trevor absolutely without gloves at last, every word an intentionally naked blow.

"Trevor," said MacCloster in an oily voice that was strangely softened and indescribably aggravating, "I like you. I can't help likin' you; you're so damned un-Biblical. Not a whisper about a sanguinary fatted calf. You go right to my heart with a case of gin. I accept; bring it out."

"No," said Trevor, "I'll send it up. I'll have it

waiting for you by the time you get back if you don't rot and fall apart on the way."

"There you go," said MacCloster pleasantly, "always cheerful, warm welcome on your tongue." Then, with a change that was like a thunder-clap, "Send it up, you dung-hill bantam! Why the hell haven't you sent my music box?"

Andrea pressed her hands, her face and her whole body against the door. She was trembling slightly but she was not frightened; her intelligence was too busy. It had leaped to an understanding of Trevor's part in what was going on outside. She forgot that she had ever thought it a mere battle of tongues. She could imagine this man, MacCloster, as a mountain of brawn and sinew against which Trevor was deliberately opposing all the moral weight of the old fighting slogan, "Bully a bully!"

More than that; she could now feel that the suppressed hatred she had guessed at in their words had come boldly into the open and that it was in a sense labored and forced only because its intensity was beyond actual expression. These two men were stripped to an unbelievable nakedness,—rapier and broadsword, lapping, thirsting mightily for heart's

blood and nothing less. In comparison with her own little struggle with Trevor, the encounter assumed the proportions of a meeting of elements.

"I didn't send it," said Trevor softly, "because I didn't want to remind myself you were still unburied. Besides, it looks so clean—"

"I know," interrupted MacCloster. Once more his astonishingly flexible voice changed its tone to one of unfeigned calm. "I can understand, of course," he remarked conversationally, "you dislike the idea of carrion in conjunction with the virgin polish on a mahogany box. Well, let's have a look at the thing."

"I don't remember having seen you so sober before," said Trevor in the same easy tone and from its sound she knew he had turned toward his room.

"Enforced, I can assure you," replied MacCloster. "Been strapped on the wagon by lack of the neces—"

The sound of his voice was cut short by the closing of Trevor's door.

Andrea opened her own, just a crack, and looked out. In the very center of the circular court squatted in a ring a dozen half-naked boat-boys.

Their torsos were still glistening in the moonlight from the sweat of their labor. They all seemed dull of face but mighty of muscle. None, not one, of Trevor's people was in sight,—a very surprising fact, for the African loves a gossip with the stranger within his walls.

There was quite a long silence; then came the muffled tones of the phonograph, rising bell-like through the night in a climbing aria from *Faust*. Suddenly the sound wavered, swerved and fell to a wrangling of frightened notes as though some one had swept the instrument from its balance. A second later there was the thud of a heavy boot on wood, Trevor's door flew open and the still wailing phonograph was hurled as from a catapult fifteen feet through the air. It fell to the hard-beaten ground of the patio with a terrific splintering crash, rolled over on one side and was still. Andrea's eyes had been watching it, fascinated; now they swerved and stopped almost with a click of the suddenly arrested muscles.

Between her and the door of Trevor's hut stood the towering figure of a man in quarter profile. She could see his great shock of bushy red hair, a bit of

his shaggy beard, his enormously broad shoulders and the white gleam of his two hands hanging almost at his knees. He was hatless and dressed in faded blue dungarees many sizes too small for his bulk.

As she watched him he raised his arms in a wide still gesture and began to sing. At the first note, quite unconscious of action, she let the door swing open and stepped out on the veranda. It was the aria from *Faust,* the same aria, but oh! how different. The voice of this man was like a huge and glittering serpent of sound that writhed smoothly into the air, challenging the dome of heaven itself.

If there was one thing that Andrea knew better than another, it was the accurate valuation of every operatic voice that had sung in Europe during the last decade. She had been taken to Drury Lane regularly before she was out, as a matter of education, and no less regularly after her eighteenth birthday, as a matter of matrimonial business.

She knew instantly that this extraordinary apparition in the wilderness was nothing less than the solution of a world mystery. He could be but one man and that a person whose tremendous triumph

had been so short as to leave him with fame but without a name. She was hearing the Great Voice, —the voice of the star that had shone for a single night; resounded but once through the Scala, set as swiftly as it had risen and disappeared forever, leaving behind no trace beyond a memory so short that it had become a recollection almost unbelievable to the few that had heard it.

Now her ears were filled with its music to the exclusion of thought or reason or consciousness of self. She became nothing more than a sentient channel. The easy power of the Voice lifted it beyond the common standards of vocal classification and gave it the allure and the terror of the superhuman. Its tenuity seemed a thing incorporated apart, an actual substance with beckoning arms and hands. It drew her slowly, steadily out into the quivering moonlight, held her, lifted her face with it toward the sky.

With her breast rising and falling in aching accompaniment to the mounting rhythm, cheeks pale, lips parted, eyes staring in vain pursuit of the incredible flight of sound, she stood, a slim tense figure for once made free of that domain that is beyond

The boat-boys arose stealthily and flitted after him

art, beyond genius and is called quite simply, Gift of God. With a toss and a backward shake of the man's great head, the voice climbed smoothly to that stupendous high C that has wrecked the reputation of many pygmies and brought fame to a daring few. It held and still held until earth and moon and stars seemed little things that paused to listen, obstructed in unimportant courses. Breath suspended until her lungs were near to bursting, Andrea waited for that note to come down into the range of normal belief but to her mind at least it was destined to hang eternally in the heavens, for the man had turned.

There is a terror so sharp, so sudden, that when it strikes, life ceases; not in death, but in a fluttering demoralization of every vital function. Such a terror struck Andrea now. It stopped her heart and the blood in her veins, froze her limbs and her muscles to a powerless rigidity, contracted her throat in a suffocating, unrelaxing spasm and pinned her to earth as though she had been riven with a stake.

Her eyes knew horror for the first time. The man's face was half obliterated. It had been ploughed by confluent smallpox and destroyed by a

worse disease. The nose was gone, leaving an ignoble ruin of stripped cartilage, dried in the air till it was like weathered parchment. One ear had been ravaged in a clean cut so that it rose to a needle-point. That the wounds were healed only added an inexorable finality to their repulsiveness.

Only the man's thick red lips and his blazing eyes seemed to have escaped the pestilence. As his startled gaze fell upon Andrea, his mouth opened to a wide, soundless laugh. With broad shoulders stooped, his abnormally low-hanging hands curved up like monstrous talons and his shaggy beard wagging to that silent laughter, he advanced upon her, encircled her waist with his fingers and shot her up lightly so that she fell doubled across his back and chest. He gave a low whistle and sped from the craal at an incredible pace. The boat-boys arose stealthily and flitted after him.

To Andrea's transfixing terror was added a memory—a fleeting glimpse—of Trevor, standing, hands in pockets, before his door. On his face was anger, —cold, white, unforgiving anger. She thought she cried out to MacCloster to stop, to give her but one moment to explain, to beg forgiveness, to grovel at

the feet of the one man in all the world, but no sound came from her lips.

Not until she stood tottering on the canted bottom of MacCloster's boat did life come back to her heart and veins and lungs. She threw up her head and screamed as she had never known mortal could scream,—a wild, terror-winged wail of desperate appeal. MacCloster snatched tiller from rudder, struck her across the shoulders, knocked her, face down, into fetid bilge-water.

CHAPTER XX

THE stench of the stale water produced in her a reaction; it was so nauseating that it momentarily drove thoughts of all other things from her mind. She drew away from it and crawling to the grated floor of a small cockpit, crouched in the corner formed by the gunwale and the after thwart. Just to her left, so close that even with head bowed she could not avoid seeing his enormous feet, sat MacCloster.

He talked to her steadily in a muttering undertone but a long time passed before she began to distinguish one word from another. The muttering swelled slowly to a clear and liquid enunciation; the voice became like music undefiled. But no longer could it drug her senses; she shuddered, cringed under its terrible caress. Its beauty had become forever leprous.

"Dear, lovely, vile and sullen person," it was saying, "who would have thought it? Who would have imagined that you, a Helen among women, possessed of beauty, youth and a really lovely evening frock,

should have had to come so far for a man! Cheer up! You've found two; one dung-hill bantam and —and *me.*"

He laughed, not silently and still not quite aloud. It was an extraordinary sound. It awoke in Andrea a chord of memory. It was not the stereotyped laughter of the stage; it was more specialized than that. Then she remembered. His was not the laugh of an individual; it was the clipped, staccato, maddeningly deliberate, "Ha! Ha! Ha!—Ha! Ha! Ha!" of chorus and conspirators in the *Ballo in Maschera.*

"I ask you, who could have imagined it?" he continued; then, his voice thickening to a sinister intensity, he added, "*I* could, damn your soft carcass. Women! Fair women! Ha! Ha! Ha! *Dreams* of fair women! Garrr! Spawn of hell! Pestilence that sleep by day and lurk in the shadows of night and wine! Damnation of the filthy byways of the world, parading in the sweet likeness of God!"

Andrea suddenly looked up, straight into his blazing eyes. "You yourself are speaking," she said in a clear voice. "I am a woman, weak, miserable,—never so miserable as in this awful night,—but I'm not a coward. I can forgive not you but what you

say, for you cried out just now from a hell infinitely deeper than mine."

The blaze of light in MacCloster's eyes died to a brooding glow. There was something in Andrea's face, some illumination of the clean soul within her, that spoke with a sure voice, louder, more persuasively than words. He answered the valiant spirit that had not feared to rise to meet his own revelation.

"The gifts that women may bring in their hands," he said with a whispering sigh, "love, tenderness and honor, rest to the anchored soul! I, MacCloster, had the world at my feet for a single night. Drunk with adulation, drunk with wine, I went out to seek the gifts that women bring in their hands." His voice dropped to a bitter, half-flippant note of self-mocking. "Smallpox and worse in a single night. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

The laugh rang out full-throated, thunderous, terrible for the freight of rage that it carried. It rolled and echoed across the silent night like the roar of a stricken lion. Scarcely had it died to stillness when to Andrea's ears came a clear command, calm as the voice of an executioner, "Lie down, Andrea."

Before she could quite obey a rifle spoke, there was the "Phut!" of a bullet as a patch of MacCloster's shirt leaped suddenly, weirdly, from his shoulder into the air. Instantly he leaned down and with one hand picked up Andrea lightly and held her suspended between himself and the shore. "One more, Trevor! you lousy bantam!" he bellowed. "One more to save me the trouble of wringing the neck of your little chicken!"

As he finished speaking, Trevor shot again. A look of vacant surprise passed over the face of the punter nearest to Andrea. He crumpled up, sank as though all his bones had suddenly melted and fell, face down, to the bottom of the boat. His pole, released, slid with a swift swish into the water. MacCloster promptly placed her on the seat beside him and gave a calm order to the remaining punters who had paused in terror. He stood up, took the tiller between the tremendous calves of his legs and proceeded to fill and light a pipe. "You see?" he said quietly. "He won't shoot again. How do I know? I'll tell you."

He half seated himself, elbow on knee, the tiller under the crook of his leg. "A little brain work,"

he continued conversationally. "Trevor meant to kill a nigger but not that one,—not the one next to you. He was shooting at the bow-boy and he hit the stroke-oar! How do I know? Well, it's what any man would do, let alone one of the best shots that ever drew trigger. He would pick off the crew beginning farthest from the point where he needed all his nerve. Now the Bantam knows what he knew well enough before only he knows it a damned sight better and that is that no man living can shoot in moonlight and tell where the bullet will go.

"He won't shoot again," he finished, turning to her with a ghastly smile. "So you're safe,—safe with me. I don't ask you to love me for my looks, —only for myself!"

Andrea looked anywhere but at his face. "You and I know," she said after a pause, "that I am quite safe with the man you once were."

"Here," said MacCloster, his eyes narrowing. "It's too late to pull any of that stuff. Why didn't you try it back there when I was really soft?"

"When you were sincere," answered Andrea, "I was sincere. You knew it; but you wouldn't have

known it,—it wouldn't have been true,—if I had taken the chance to save my skin."

"That's so," conceded MacCloster thoughtfully. "But if you're not going to be persuaded to love me, will you please tell me where I get off? What are you good for anyway? Do you realize that I gave up a case of gin for you and that a case of gin in these troubled times is worth all of three pounds sterling?"

Andrea winced. "So I'm really not worth three pounds," she said half to herself.

MacCloster heard and took quick pity on the wistfulness in her voice. "Well," he said comfortingly, "I wouldn't say that. Where it was a question of sentiment or a matter of having something pretty around the house a man might go further. Why, even among the blacks—"

He paused, looked calculatingly at her and then went on. "Old-timers will tell you that there are two qualities that don't exist in African life at all; one is gratitude and the other is affection. I think they're right about the first, but about the second, I know better. There are cases where a black likes a particular woman and when that happens his face

is marked by a peculiar look. I know it and every time I catch sight of it I'm two extra pounds in pocket."

"Why?" asked Andrea. "What do you mean?"

"Why, my dear? Don't you know? Didn't Trevor tell you that I'm—I'm in trade?"

"He said," answered Andrea, "that you were engaged in some horrible business but that he couldn't conceive of any reason why he should tell me what it was. I was very curious then, but now I really don't care to know."

"Finicking, crowing prude!" exclaimed MacCloster, his mind on Trevor. "Why, it's the most legitimate hundred per cent. little business that ever crawled out of a big brain. If it wasn't for me this whole back country would run short of wives."

"You mean you buy and sell women?" asked Andrea.

"No, not exactly," answered MacCloster. "I raise them. I'm the legal possessor of a hundred and eighty-two, or five, or six, wives. Can't just remember."

"Oh!" gasped Andrea, crouching still farther into her corner.

"There you go," said MacCloster calmly. "Don't let your imagination run away with you, my dear. I said I'm the legal possessor and I meant just that. But what's the use of talking. You'll see."

All through the night and well into the next day the boat traveled steadily up-stream. MacCloster yawned prodigiously three or four times but never gave up the tiller to a "boy." He steered a course on the far side of the river as though he wished, in spite of his late opinion, to keep as long a range as possible between himself and Trevor's rifle.

In the early morning they entered a long reach of the stream flanked on both sides by flat plains. MacCloster stood erect and his eyes made the circuit of the horizon. "Nothing," he said. "If he could have beaten us to this our name would have been Dennis. He's given up his favorite little spotted hen. Flap your wings and say good-by."

Andrea's heart, already low, sank a lot lower. Not once through the night had she closed her eyes and she knew now that she had been hoping and praying that the first gleam of morning would find Trevor, the avenger, on the bank. She could not know as did MacCloster that an impassable forest of

unbroken thorn stretched for miles between the two camps. There was just one open road to MacCloster's,—the river,—and on that no other boat could equal the speed of his own.

"Say," said MacCloster, moved by a sudden thought, "is there any one that would give a lot of money for you?"

Andrea's brows drew together in honest valuation of what was left of her old self. "I don't know," she said meekly. "Perhaps not now."

"What would *he* give for you?" MacCloster asked, jerking his beard over his shoulder.

"He said he wouldn't give three pounds," answered Andrea in a still, small voice. She began to cry.

MacCloster's eyes grew round with fright. "Oh, come now," he protested. "Here you've been hours without even thinking of that damned old trick. Stop it!" he roared suddenly. "Stop it or I'll mash your head in."

"I wish you would," sobbed Andrea and cried harder than ever.

MacCloster rolled his eyes heavenward as though he implored aid. "Listen," he said, talking into the

sky. "Listen and I'll tell you what I'll do. Are you listening?"

"Yes," gasped Andrea.

"Well," said MacCloster. "You've been a lot of trouble to me and a big loss. You can't expect a dry man to forget a whole case of schnapps. Now I'm going to let you write him a note and if you can get him to give three cases of gin for you, why he can have you, damn him."

Andrea stopped crying, sat up straight and dabbed her eyes with her very dirty fingers, but there was a strange, set look in her face that made MacCloster doubt her sudden cure.

"Will you do it?" he asked.

"Never," said Andrea.

"You're queer like all of them," he commented musingly. "But somehow the suggestion stopped you crying."

"What on earth is that?" asked Andrea, her eyes fixed far ahead on an enormous pale-yellow dome that looked as if all the haystacks in the world had been gathered into one.

"That," said MacCloster, his vast chest swelling in equally immeasurable pride, "is my *caia*, my hut."

"I think there is something the matter with my eyes," said Andrea. "What I see isn't possible."

"Oh, yes it is," said MacCloster. "That's my hut; eighty feet high, one hundred and twenty feet across and 'most a hundred yards' dash around."

"But how did you build it?" asked Andrea, absorbed in spite of her misery.

"Well," replied MacCloster, "I'm modest. I don't mind admitting that God did the building; I just came along and put on the roof. Trevor ever show you any mafuta trees?"

"Yes, they are wonderful," said Andrea, understanding beginning to dawn in her eyes.

"That hut of mine," said MacCloster, "is nothing but the biggest, roundest, widest mafuta tree in the world, trimmed a bit and thatched over."

Half an hour later they made a landing. "Want me to carry you again," asked MacCloster with a leer, "or will you walk?"

"I'll walk," said Andrea, going suddenly white with sickening recollection.

CHAPTER XXI

MacCLOSTER'S craal was a masterpiece of ingenuity. In its center rose the stupendous *caia* that had astonished Andrea even from a mile away. Around the monster hut was an impassable *boma* or barrier of thorns pierced by a single entrance; outside the *boma,* in the form of a ring, came an enormous beaten court which embraced a large shade-tree, indispensable as a nucleus for pow-wows and men's gossip. Around the beaten circle were three thickly serrated rows of huts and their dependent outhouses. Enclosing the entire human beehive was a stockade of giant cactus with an arched entrance at each point of the compass.

Aside from the repulsive fundamental idea of the enterprise, MacCloster's establishment was astonishingly moral. It was true that he had contracted for over a hundred and eighty wives in strict accordance with native law but it was equally true that he allotted this army of consorts, without exception, to veritable husbands of his own choosing. The only point of divergence from native custom was that he

demanded no payment of *obolo* from these drones and as a consequence retained the right of disposal of their female offspring.

This innovation would have struck at the root of the African's conception of vested interests had it not been for the giant singer's canny astuteness in facilitating to the drones the purchase of one wife each in their own right, thus killing two birds with one stone; for the native male normally works but once in his life and that to earn the sum with which to acquire the mate who will not only thenceforth support him but eventually bring him a return of two or three fold on his investment.

As a consequence, MacCloster never lacked boat-boys, machilla carriers, ivory hunters or porters and controlled as well an army of women and girls whose spare time was applied first to the preparation of food and wood- and water-fetching and then to the cultivation of the enormous shambas which produced corn and millet in great abundance for the lucky members of the close corporation.

That there was a subtle poison at work somewhere in this social cosmography was evidenced by the fact that while there was always a long waiting list of

recruits for the establishment there was also a tendency on the part of many natives to face starvation rather than accept the questionable intrusion of the white man in the intimate structure of their family life. It was further evidenced by an abnormal apathy which seemed to possess MacCloster's people in direct proportion to their increasing well-fed and lazy sleekness.

This, however, was a phenomenon that did not trouble him so long as there was a constant demand in excess of the supply of marriageable girls; on the contrary, while it puzzled him, he welcomed it as making toward the easy enforcement of a strict discipline. In all matters that affected the internal life of the strange camp, he was sole arbiter beyond any cavilling and a martinet.

Andrea could have taken a reasonably calm interest in all the details that crowded to her attention during her rapid progress into the heart of MacCloster's stronghold had it not been for an incident that revivified all her fear and repugnance toward the man and which occurred as they entered the ring court. MacCloster, striding ahead of her, suddenly paused and his horrible face apparently

achieved the impossible by undergoing a debasing transformation.

His eyes had fallen on a group of carriers, newly arrived, and the crew of his freight boat. The negroes were squatting in a circle on guard, waiting to make delivery to their master of various cases. Some of them evidently contained cloth, cutlery and knickknacks dear to the native heart, but one, at least, brazenly proclaimed in deeply burnt stenciling its contents to be gin. It was on this small square box that MacCloster's eyes were riveted. He turned and spoke to Andrea in an oily tone that for some inexplicable reason froze her blood. It was as though he had suddenly assumed a new and strange personality upon which her twelve hours of brave intercourse with him had had no occasion to establish its grip. He became a stranger within a stranger and hopelessly inaccessible.

"Come with me, my dear," was all he said.

She followed him slowly, an unaccustomed weakness in her knees. He entered the monster *caia* and waited for her. For some moments the gloom was impenetrable to her eyes but as their pupils dilated she began to discover shadows within the shadow

until she was able to make out the entire scheme of interior arrangement. The ground floor, with the exception of an open space around the trunk of the tree, was devoted to a series of vast sleeping rooms into which, she gathered from a muttered phrase of MacCloster's, were herded nightly all the girls of marriageable age, accompanied by a few of those old harridans who in certain tribes act as governesses with the qualification that it is their duty to instil all the knowledge which the mentors of the young of civilized peoples are supposed to withhold.

Around the trunk of the tree, which was twelve feet or more in diameter, a rough spiral stairway had been constructed to give access to a platform which was built on and around the main intersection of wide spreading limbs. This platform was enclosed and lighted by oil lamps. A glance within told her that it was the abode of MacCloster himself, the well-nigh impregnable center of the spider's web. From every side of it extended the sturdy limbs of the tree and up each of them climbed a series of projecting cleats which served as ladders to reach a vast system of smaller platforms, built wherever the natural disposition of the branches afforded ade-

quate support. These lesser rooms were used as storehouses for merchandise, provisions and ivory; and a few of them, near the very top of the tree, were fitted out as guest chambers especially adapted to the safe-keeping of doubtful strangers as also for the effective hiding of chattel, human and otherwise, which for one reason or another MacCloster desired to keep out of sight.

Into one of the latter Andrea was finally ushered, breathless from her climb. On its floor was a fresh grass mat, a clean blanket, a clay pot of drinking water with a dipper made out of a cocoanut shell and a square box filled with sand, evidently intended for the bed of a cooking-fire. The only light came from a cotton wick laid in an open vessel filled with oil from the castor bean.

"There you are, Sissie," said MacCloster, in his new oily voice, "everything you can possibly need and whenever you want to go out, all you have to do is to climb down and go through my room. You won't have to do your own cooking for a day or two; I'll send your *scoff* up."

Andrea's heart sank to depths that it had never

reached before; her lower lip trembled and drew down at the corners.

"Now don't look so glum," said MacCloster, leering at her. "Just remember that you couldn't be safer in hell than you are here!"

He turned and left her with a laugh at his own joke. The measured "Ha! Ha! Ha!—Ha! Ha! Ha!" reverberated through the interminable mazes of the entombed tree. More than ever it seemed the mocking laugh of thirty voices, chanting in unison. She threw herself full length, face-down, on the grass mat and covered her ears with her hands. Presently bodily exhaustion came to her aid and she mercifully slept.

Hours later she awoke to a feeling that she had been definitely summoned by her subconscious self to face an imminent danger. Night had fallen and its peace had settled on the craal in general, but there was no peace in the great *caia*. Out of MacCloster's room arose through the whispering stillness a series of monstrous sounds, monstrously magnified,—gurglings, rumbling curses, mutterings, the occasional crash of a shattered empty bottle. Then came a silence more ominous than the noises, for it was

alive, a creeping thing with tenacles that seemed to be writhing up the limbs of the tree.

It filled Andrea with a premonition and brought her a desperate courage. She took off her high-heeled slippers and climbed down several rungs of the ladder that led to her platform; then seating herself and getting a good knee-grip on the limb, she leaned down and gradually worked loose the cleat below her. After that she took the next above and then the next, depositing each cleat as she removed it in her room.

No sooner had she finished, leaving herself cut off from easy access to the outside world but in compensation having established a substantial obstacle to sudden assault from below, than she was aware of the whispering, wheezy sound of heavy breathing. Immediately afterward came to her distended nostrils an overpowering odor of gin, nauseatingly sweet and sour at the same time. She looked down into the shadowy gloom and saw MacCloster's bulk moving slowly upward, rung by rung, each movement as deliberate and repulsive as that of a giant sloth.

Gripping one of the loosened cleats in her right

Gripping one of the loosened cleats in her right hand

hand, she knelt on the edge of the platform and watched breathlessly his progress. When he came to the break in the ladder his hairy paws groped helplessly for a moment but for a moment only; then they embraced the tree-trunk and he began to swarm up the easy slant. "Waiting up for me, dearie?" he whispered.

Andrea suppressed an instinctive impulse to fly before his advance, all the more terrifying because it was so deliberate. Her face went white, her eyes narrowed, but her lips set in a straight line as she waited, trying her best to quiet her excited breathing lest it betray her pitiful agitation. She measured the distance between the edge of the platform and those slowly sliding hands. Only when they got so close that she could see the mist of fine yellow hair on them did she strike first at one and then at the other and not with the edge of the cleat but with the three jagged nails that protruded from its flat side.

With a bellow of rage MacCloster snatched back his pierced hands, trusting to the grip of his knees. Andrea clutched the cleat tightly, leaned forward and struck him across the side of the head with all

her strength. He lost his balance and fell. She heard his body crashing from limb to limb until it landed with a terrific thud on some platform far below. Up from the depths came a liquid stream of curses; he could no longer bellow, he was whining with the rage that means to kill.

Andrea sank back and cowered in the corner of her hovel. She was through; that last blow had drained her of all energy and courage, she was no longer conscious of a desire to live. Her head rang with incredible sounds. Hallucination tortured her and even brought to her longing ears the far-away hum of Trevor's aeroplane motor. So vivid was her imagination that the hum grew louder and louder as it would have done in reality and finally attained a staccato roar. She smiled wistfully, her face illumined by all the love of the white man which she had hidden under a mask of flippancy but which, now that hope was dead, proclaimed itself frankly and seemed to be trying to rock her to comfort and oblivion.

Suddenly a terrific ripping crash above her head tore through her numbed senses and brought her staggering to her feet. The whole monster struc-

ture of the *caia* swayed and bent as though it had been struck by a tornado. Strong limbs creaked and cracked with reports like pistol shots and a shower of leaves fell with a faint click-clicking that could be distinctly heard as if through the interstices of the general and grosser commotion. The roaring of the aeroplane that she had thought an hallucination suddenly ceased. Presently, smoke, pearl-gray, began to seep through the thatch of the roof.

Andrea came fully to her senses and called in a clear, high voice, "I'm here, White Man; I'm here, White Man." She repeated the cry steadily at short intervals until he shouted an answer. Following the sound of his voice, her eyes caught the gleam of his hunting knife, hacking a way through the thatch and when, finally, his feet were thrust through the opening, she seized and guided them to a foothold. In another second he was standing before her. Even in the dim light she could see that his face was blackened, his eyebrows, eyelashes and mustache entirely singed, his hair burnt off in patches. "Oh! White Man!" she gasped, throwing out both hands toward him.

"Drop it," said Trevor shortly. "Which way to the ground?"

She showed him. He slid down the branch until he struck the first cleat and waited there to catch her. "Come on, now," he said. "In thirty seconds whoever's left in this hell-hole will be baked."

From below them and outside the *caia* came the ululuing of a thousand panic-stricken voices, overlain but not dominated by the bellowing of MacCloster, issuing drunken and impossible orders intermingled with horrible and obscene oaths. As Trevor and Andrea reached the platform at the main intersection of the tree's branches the pall of smoke that had been following close on their heels descended with a swirl and enveloped them. He turned, caught up her skirt and threw it over her head; then he seized her in his arms, buried his face against her breast and staggered blindly down the spiral stairway.

In the van of the smoke, almost as though he were being propelled by it, he stumbled through the exit into the cool air of night and a glare that paled the face of the full moon. He dropped Andrea to the ground, stepped over her and stood face to face with

the raving MacCloster. On the instant the giant fell silent. He stared vacantly for the space of a second; then his ravaged face writhed into such an expression of sublimated hatred as no man lives to see twice. Murder wrote itself large across his features, slow murder with bare hands for this enemy who had sent up in smoke and flame the one beloved earthly possession of the wreck of a life. With a choking gulp that seemed to rend his throat he charged, head down, arms thrown wide, talons clutching in anticipation.

His mouth twisted in a thin smile, Trevor shot from the hip. The bullet of the heavy service revolver caught MacCloster in the shoulder and spun him around three times. Trevor fired again. The giant's body seemed to waver in air, then crumpled and fell sprawling toward the gun, face down.

"You've killed him," sobbed Andrea, still on her hands and knees.

"In a way," said Trevor calmly and half to himself. "He really died years ago."

CHAPTER XXII

THE memory of that tragic moment, strangely enough, was not to live in Andrea's mind by reason of the sight of the collapse of MacCloster's bulk but by what followed immediately after. Never could she forget the sudden stilling of the ululuing and the instantaneous smile, broadening to a grin, that dawned on the face of every native.

"O, lo, O, lu, O, lo—la," presently declaimed one, or words to that effect, and they began in absolutely casual tones:

"The White Elephant rushed to meet death."

Chorus of grunts.

"He was in a hurry."

"Heng!"

"Death was in a hurry."

"Heng!"

"When they met, they danced."

"Ho! Heng!"

"They danced around three times!"

"Heng!"

"The White Elephant roared like Simba."

"Heng!"

"The short gun barked like a bush-buck."

"Heng!"

"Greater than the elephant is the little ant!"

"Ho! Ho! Heng!"

Throughout this orgy of reminiscence, the black throng backed step by step before the terrific heat of the flaming *caia*. Their scorching faces glistened with sweat but their eyes hung greedily on the crumpled, sprawling mass that was all that was left of MacCloster. In the pleasureable surfeit of the moment they were careless of the fact that the doom of the entire craal was fixed.

Trevor turned on them in a white rage and with a well-aimed bullet shot an assegai from between the legs of a great hulking brute whose mouth was slavering with revolting enjoyment of the scene. The black's face went gray with fright; his eyes came back with a snap from their sensual feast. Many of his companions laughed aloud but others only licked thick lips in bestial hunger for more slaughter.

"You!" cried Trevor, pressing the muzzle of his revolver into the quivering naked stomach of the

man he had frightened. "Get your crew together. Take me home."

Half an hour later Andrea found herself once more in MacCloster's boat but in spite of the fact that all its appointments and the crew were the same with the exception of the one black who had been killed, it seemed utterly strange to her eyes, now no longer glazed by misery. She turned to Trevor, who had not spoken to her since first he had joined her in the *caia*. "The boat is quite different," she said. "It's as though I saw it for the first time."

He gave her no answer beyond a non-committal grunt nor did he look at her. His eyes were fastened far ahead on the river, tracing out the swirl of the current and deep water. A troubled look came into Andrea's face; she glanced at him and her lips parted twice in the half-smile that precedes kindly speech. "You think I ought to thank you?" she asked. "I haven't the words; if I tried my heart would choke me."

"Thank me?" said Trevor, casting her a casual look. "What for?"

Andrea's lips trembled. If only the fire hadn't happened just when it did, she thought, if only it

had given him time to find her, to take her in his arms! "For saving me," she answered simply.

"For saving nothing," affirmed Trevor. "For saving the nothing that is left of your beauty and freshness and honor after the touch of that beast."

Overwhelming shame stained her cheeks; she felt all that was noble and generous within her, shriveling into a strangling knot. She tried to speak, to protest against his hardness and injustice but she could only gulp. For hours they sat in absolute silence and gradually the cold that had struck her heart spread through all her body until her teeth began to chatter.

"Why are you doing that?" asked Trevor sharply. "It isn't really cold."

"I'm d—d—d—doing it b—b—because I c—c—can't help it," chattered Andrea. "I *am* c—c—cold!" She pressed herself against his body as though she begged for his arms around her. He drew away from her.

She crouched back in her corner and turned upon him the accusing eyes of a child that has been cruelly wounded; then her womanhood came to the rescue. It reasoned with her, told her that the time for pride

had passed, for if she lost this man, she lost all men forever. No longer could she say "my world" and think of parties, Bond Street, taxi-cabs and the smartest restaurants; her world was here beside her, to win or lose.

She forgot to chatter and began to talk, softly and with many pauses. She told the simple story of all that had gone on within her, struggling not for excuses but for the right word to picture clearly the birth and strength of the emotions that had carried her almost unconsciously through apparent disregard of his wishes and his trust to disaster. She did not tell him that it had not happened from a spirit of revolt,—she tried to make him see it.

When it came to describing her hours with MacCloster, she harped with supreme feminine intuition on a single fact. Again and again she gave him to understand that except for lugging her across his shoulder to the boat, MacCloster had not once so much as laid a finger on her. So careful was her narrative in its logical sequence of detail that it could not fail to carry conviction with it. Trevor gradually melted to the extent of filling his pipe and lighting it.

She told of her entering the court around the great *caia* with MacCloster, of his discovery that a case of gin had arrived with his freight and of the oily change that had come to his voice. At this point in her story Trevor forgot to smoke. He clutched the hot bowl of his pipe in a grip that made his knuckles show white. She could feel him listening with his whole tense body. She hurried on to her climax; to the description of her strategy in removing the cleats and of MacCloster's terrifying attack. She even repeated some of his words. "He said, 'Waiting up for me, dearie?' and then I drove the nails into his hands and when he snatched them back, I hit him across the head and he fell. And then I heard you coming. I thought I had gone mad, that it was not with my ears but with the longing of my heart that I heard you coming. When I called and you answered, I forgot that I had ever known fear; I knew that I was safe, forever and forever."

"Good girl," said Trevor huskily. He reached out and patted her hand but his thoughts were not altogether with her; they were lingering behind, hovering over the scene of her elemental battle with MacCloster as though he sought to steep his soul in

that recollection in an effort to drown for once and all time the memory of twenty-four hours of torturing jealousy.

"So you're not jealous any more, are you?" pleaded Andrea.

"Jealous!" exclaimed eternal man impatiently. "Who said anything about jealousy? It's one rotten quality that, thank God, I don't possess. It's the canker-worm that eats into the heart of trust. A man that feels it, demeans the woman he loves."

"How extraordinary," murmured Andrea, "because I don't believe any woman in the world ever really loves an unjealous man. Of course," she added thoughtfully, "we *despise* jealousy—everybody knows it's so horrid—but that doesn't keep us from adoring it in just one man."

Trevor was silent for a long time, pondering on this absurd and unanswerable argument. The sun arose and set to work at once to overheat the world; Andrea grew warm and then drowsy. She began to nod and her body to incline. If it had drooped in a direction directly opposite to that in which it actually did, she would have fallen into the river; as it happened, she fell against Trevor's shoulder. He

first assured himself that she was really asleep and then slipped his arm around her and held her close.

He forgot his burns and bruises, his fatigue and hunger; he looked back with exultant pride upon the maelstrom of emotions that he had ridden to reach this haven of his soul's peace. The feverish haste with which he had dug out the aeroplane and patched it up, the white rage in which he had hurled himself with it into the air, the absolute and marvelous determination of the steady, unswerving flight that had carried him straight to MacCloster's craal, all became emblems to him of the power of that which is within us to rise eternally to superhuman heights on the wings of a little love.

And the landing! Would he ever forget that moment when his air-craft, veteran of many flights, became a veritable bird of prey and dropped, tail down, to a vicious stroke, a sinking of clutching talons and a voracious devouring by fire of its ponderously swaying victim? It became thenceforth to his mind no machine but an epic bird, a Phœnix done to ashes but that would arise again and often, conjured to life in the undying fires of grateful memory.

He glanced downward at the fair head pressed so close to his shoulder that the wide brim of his helmet shaded it as well as his own and let his eyes follow along the curled-up length of Andrea's figure. She seemed very small, very young, infinitely potent. For the first time in their intercourse he consciously remembered who she was and all his bravado in the face of false values, all his logical indifference to established forms, fell from him. He trembled for the things he had done to, the murder he had coolly committed on, the person of the Honorable Andrea Pellor!

Never had he deceived himself with the thought that he could return that person intact to the world from which she had come. He had recognized his initial and instantaneous decision at their first meeting as something final and irrevocable, but in that moment, back there on the beach, when his mind was taken up with nerving his body for flight and to an effort he had no right to call upon it to face, all the demands of the old order of conventions had lain stale and bitter on his tongue. "What on earth does it matter what happens to *her?*" he had said to himself and grimly gloried in the prospect of

proving to her that her fate was one of the least important items in a full world.

But now, all that was changed; everything that touched her, from whatever point of the social compass, mattered more than the salvation of the earth and all its peoples, for she herself had become a whole world—a world that he could encircle with his arms but whose untraveled and illimitable paths beckoned his heart away and away into regions eternally beyond the ken of any lonely explorer.

She had said that she knew herself safe with him forever and forever and while he recognized the gentle mood that had so overburdened her tongue, he felt now an aching within him to guard, not the Honorable Andrea Pellor, but this much dearer creature of his own making, from the harming touch of tongues as well as hands.

He threw up his head as though to a revivified and ennobled determination that was above fear and murmured a confirmation of the creed that had been born, full-fledged, from her illness, "Whether you want me or mock me, the die is forever cast; your truth and your untruth, your weakness and your strength, purity or taint; I shall take you all and

taking you, take only myself; for love is an indivisible, an integral possession!"

Altogether a remarkable creed; but most notable because he really believed it! Forgotten was his cynicism and his terror of the cruel grip of possessive woman. He was ripe for that surrender of self which in giving all has the best chance of holding all. Sure of her truth, her strength and her purity his creed still embraced untruth, weakness and taint in an undefined realization of the greatest, the most ennobling, of man's aspiring illusions,—the belief in an immortal love transcending the power of sin itself and eternally ready to crush with its heel the hydra-headed serpent of human frailty.

CHAPTER XXIII

ANDREA did not awake until Trevor withdrew his arm, which was when they were already in sight of their home landing. He helped her ashore and was about to follow when the headboatman addressed him. A ponderous argument immediately ensued for it appeared that to the boatboys' minds, the M'sungo had definitely inherited them. They wished to know what rations they were to draw and where they were to house their wives. In vain did Trevor explain that he himself was bound on a long safari from which he might never return; they were obdurate. For killing their master they were determined on his accepting a transfer of themselves as parasites from the corpse. The parley dragged as does every palaver with natives and it seemed to Andrea that never was she to have one moment alone with her man.

When the discussion was finally postponed to a day a week off as a concession to Trevor's promise to give them a meal and two demijohns of wine as recompense for their labor in conjunction with an

early start back up the river, they followed him in a body along the path to the craal, thereby earning Andrea's lasting detestation.

By the time she reached the camp she was in no mood to welcome the astonishing sight of three white men calmly taking a siesta in Trevor's most comfortable chairs, their helmets and dolmans tossed aside and their short-sleeved undershirts unbuttoned at the neck. The only thing to be discerned in their favor was that they were all freshly shaven. It did not cheer her to see that upon catching sight of them, Trevor's face cleared.

"Who are the interlopers?" she asked shortly.

His eyebrows went up. "Interlopers, Andrea Pellor?" he asked with a smile. Then his face turned grim. "Will you do what I ask this time?" he inquired.

She stifled the feeling of rebellion that immediately rose in her at this recurrence of his fighting voice. "Yes," she said meekly.

"Please slip quietly to your room, have your tea and bath alone and dress in your smartest khaki outfit, leggings and all. When you have done that, please wait till I come."

Andrea could not resist a single shot. "Yes," she said demurely, "just for a change I'll go and have my tea—and bath—alone."

Trevor ignored the hit. "Good girl," he said, his attention already swerving to his snoring guests.

"And you won't tell me who they are?" asked Andrea. "Or don't you know?"

He fixed her with a meaning stare. "Certainly I know," he said, "for I sent for them at considerable expense and trouble. Also I may as well tell you now that one of them at least is a priest of the Church of England."

A flame of color stained Andrea's cheeks and her eyes went suddenly wide. Things were moving and only by a tremendous effort did she catch up with them. "Great expense," she murmured. "Something under three pounds, I suppose."

Undoubtedly a hit but also ignored by Trevor whose mind was intent on far more weighty affairs. He shrugged his shoulders and pointed to her hut with his chin, an expressive but most reprehensible adoption of native habit. She took the hint, nevertheless, and as she started he said, "Please remember. Please don't show yourself this time, will you?"

The tone of his voice was a great improvement on all that had gone before. She threw him a smile over her shoulder and proceeded to cross to her hut on exaggerated tiptoe.

Trevor did not bother to awake his guests; he went straight to his room and gave himself up to a long-drawn-out orgy of tea, hot bath, sharp razor and clean clothes; to say nothing of the cleansing, anointing and bandaging of his many burns and wounds. When, hours later, he had completed the complex operation to the best of his ability if not entirely to the satisfaction of his vanity he opened his door a crack and looked out. The three guests were awake and reading. They seemed quite comfortable as well as quite at home, a bottle and three glasses having magically accrued to the table in their midst. It seemed a shame to disturb them at that particular moment and Trevor decided not to. He closed the door, barred it, disconnected the alarm gong and left his room by the covered way.

It is a matter of record that while this same enclosed alley was certainly not over thirty paces in length and could have been traversed in half as many seconds, it took him exactly thirty minutes to

get from his end of the passage to Andrea's door—and knock. She opened to him at once and the sight of her made him tremble all the more.

Never before had she seemed so altogether adequate to every demand of life. He looked upon her lovely tumbled hair that was still laughing from its bath; on her deep blue eyes, each cuddling a devil of mischief; on her adorable nose, always sniffing for trouble; on her red lips, ready to call a man on; and on her hard fists, backed by sturdy youth, still more ready to keep him off, and felt the bones of his determination turning to water. She stood with her feet slightly straddled, her hands stuffed in the side pockets of her khaki jacket,—a pose often assumed by professional fighters. He glanced nervously about her room and deciding that he would feel more at home and perhaps more secure in his own, asked her to precede him there. She consented and upon arrival made naturally for the couch.

"I think," said Trevor hastily, "you had better sit here—for a change." He drew out a straight-backed chair by the table. She cast him an inquiring glance but sat down without remark.

Trevor did not sit; he paced up and down before

her till she could stand it no longer; then she said brightly, "Now I know how our old cat used to feel, watching the canary swing on his trapeze."

"Extraordinary inverted coincidence," remarked Trevor. "I feel like the canary."

Both pondered on this rejoinder for some moments; there was something about it that reminded Andrea of "first blood." Finally she realized that it was her turn to speak. "I'll let that go for the present," she said with dignity. "Suppose you say what you've got to say."

The man stepped squarely before her. "All right," he said. For a second he hung on the verge of further speech as though he were counting "one, two, three,—*go*"; then he plunged: "Will you marry me?"

Here was a game that Andrea knew from its infancy to its old age. It was like the draughts of childhood. The first move on its checker-board was as fixed as it was easy. "No," she said promptly and automatically and glanced up with a half-bored look that said, "Your turn to play."

That look was destined to die a sudden death. "Thank God," said Trevor fervently, apparently

looking into space but in reality taking in her galvanized start through the corner of one eye. "You see," he continued, "I've come to my senses and begun to get your point of view. It's still true that you asked me to bring you but it's no less true that you thought you were just going up for a morning breeze while I knew that once you were in that flying-machine it was good-by to a world. If I'd told you that, of course you wouldn't have come."

"Of course," said Andrea faintly. Her heart was aching and inside of her its pulse was drumming an old familiar childish refrain of helpless rage. "He didn't play fair! He didn't play fair!"

"Under the circumstances and acknowledging my fault, I could do no less than offer to marry you in spite of your high station in life. I felt that you might think yourself compromised to such an extent that even my humble person would prove some sort of an amend. It's a great relief to know that I over-estimated the situation all around."

Andrea realized that the false start had thrown her out of the normal stride of the game and she was ready to clutch at a straw. "Why, I hadn't

thought of that—I mean, I'd forgotten it somehow—but I do feel compromised,—awfully." She looked hopefully at his set face.

"No need to," said Trevor briskly. "I've got these three missionary chaps here for witnesses to the fact that we went up in perfectly good faith, that I was forced to a bad landing and got fearfully cut up and burned and that I was only just backing out of death's door when they turned up and found you intact."

"Why, White Man!" exclaimed Andrea, "how could you get them to tell that awful lie!"

"Easily," answered Trevor promptly. "They wouldn't know it was a lie. You see, these missionary chaps will still believe a native; they can't afford to concede the immutable fact that a black consistently makes only one constant effort in his life,—an effort to give always the answer that he thinks it will please you most to hear. Why, I don't even have to fix it up with my people. You'd believe the lie yourself if you could understand half they will say."

Andrea's lips drooped and she shook her head. "No," she said slowly. "No, I wouldn't." She was

sitting with her elbows on the table, her cheek against the back of her clasped hand and her eyes following the white man's nervous movements with a sort of wounded wonder.

"So, you see, we can fix it," he concluded. "These clergymen are the only people in this back country that I could have trusted you with and who will strike just the right family note in your precious world-of-the-things-that-aren't-done-you-know. I have worked my best for you. I've made them come a hundred miles through country they have always thought impassable."

Andrea sat back and let her hands fall to her lap; for a moment she bowed her head and looked down at them, then she raised her gaze to his face. Her own, while it had been half-hidden, had suddenly lost its look of exuberant youth. It was so pale that her eyes seemed too large for it. They dimmed its outlines.

"White Man," she said, "do you mean it?"

"Mean what?"

"I have seen you kill beasts and men," said Andrea, "but even so, I couldn't have believed it of you." Her voice grew dulled, like water running

over silken moss. "I couldn't have believed that you would hurt me so!" She cast her arms out across the table and dropped her face upon them.

With a self-accusing cry, Trevor sprang to her, picked her up and carried her to the couch. She lay in his arms without resisting; her body had surrendered to a laxity that let him pile furs under her head and arrange her limbs as he would. She was listless; too tired to fight; too broken to weep. He knelt beside her and took both her hands in his. "Now that you are no longer an irresponsible child," he said, "now that your stripped self is here to listen, I will tell you how I love you. The child in you might forget; the woman never. I love you in body and in spirit. I love you so that I am ready to stand up and deny freedom. I love you enough to give you myself and the world,—my world of starlit nights and silent spaces that I've worshipped so long alone. Yes, I love you enough for that, and I have to, God help me, for you are in my heart and I can never, never get you out."

Andrea looked as if blood were being transfused into her veins with each word. She felt her youth coming back with the sure surge of an advancing

tide. Her eyes grew bright and then frightened. "White Man!" she gasped. "Take me quickly; I feel myself growing young again!"

He leaped to his feet, caught her up in his arms and shook her; then he surrendered. "Young or old," he said, "what difference does it make? I love your youth as I already love your old age. Put your arms around my neck, look into my eyes and tell me you love me too."

Clinging to him, her head thrown back, her eyes in his, she said, "I love you."

"Again," commanded Trevor.

"I love you."

"And now, my little sweetheart, my own girl, just once more."

"Ah!" begged Andrea, "don't make me *say* it again; let me kiss you."

CHAPTER XXIV

FIVE minutes later Trevor reluctantly opened the door on the craal and cried, "Bishop!"

One of the three white men sprang to his feet. "God bless my soul," he exclaimed, "where did you come from? When did you get here? My dear chap, what's happened to your face?"

Trevor, forgetful of his damaged appearance, put his hands to his lips guiltily as though he feared that some mark had clung there to betray their recent occupation; then he remembered his singed and bandaged condition. "Oh, that!" he said. "Nothing,—nothing to speak of. Won't you come in? I'll see your companions later."

The Bishop entered the hut and raised his eyebrows inquiringly as Trevor closed the door. "Mosquitoes?" he murmured and politely didn't wait for an answer. "Charming quarters. Quite the comfortable thing." Then he caught sight of Andrea who was half-sitting on the corner of the table and swinging her free leg. Once more his eyebrows went up but this time with a snap that

would have carried them over the back of his head had they not been rooted.

"The Bishop of Moma; the Honorable Andrea Pellor," said Trevor in businesslike tones.

"So pleased, my lord," said Andrea with a smile that turned into a rippling laugh. "I——I beg your pardon," she stammered, "b—but s—surprise doesn't go well with your face."

It was true; the Bishop's astonishment seemed to have startled his features separately, scattering them over his countenance at grotesque angles. "Andrea," he gasped, "Andrea Pellor!"

"Yes," said Trevor, "that's the name. Now, Bishop, if you'll sit down, I'll soon be able to satisfy you that the arguments I used to get you here are more than justified."

"Andrea Pellor!" repeated his lordship.

"You have it correctly, Bishop," assured Trevor. "Won't you take this chair?"

The Bishop's eyes gradually gathered themselves to a single focus on Andrea's face. "Young woman," he said, "do you know that the entire world has been perturbed for weeks as to your whereabouts? Do you know that your family has been suffering

agonies of suspense as to your fate? Do you know that the man to whom you are bethrothed has offered a thousand pounds for your discovery alive?"

Andrea glanced triumphantly at Trevor. "A *thousand pounds,*" she murmured.

"Alive," he countered, also murmuring.

The Bishop rapped on the table with his knuckles. "Do you know all these things?"

Andrea slipped from the table and stood before her inquisitor. "It's quite natural," she said in a clean-cut tone Trevor had never heard her use before, "that you should be a little excited. Of course, I'm dying to hear all the news about the world and dear old Aunty Gwen and things in general but do let's sit down. It always seems so greedy to me to gossip standing."

She turned from him to the chair that Trevor held for her and motioned the suddenly tamed prelate to another. His lips had snapped shut at the shocking aspersion that he came bearing tit-bits on his tongue and he sat down on the extreme edge of the indicated seat as though by his pose he would register a continued but silent protest.

"You wouldn't think to look at him," said An-

drea to Trevor, "that in half an hour he'll be taking comfort out of that chair and out of a good cigar and out of a long drink." Her eyes laughed at the Bishop in just the way to take the edge off her words.

He slowly smiled and just as slowly slid back into the depths of the chair; his hands, without the aid of his eyes, found the box of cigars that Trevor held out to him and his lips formed, in reply to a murmured inquiry, the following words, "A small one, please,—not at all mahogany." Then he turned to Andrea and said in a louder voice, "Now tell me all about it."

"There really isn't much to tell," said Andrea, "I was tired of dancing and climbed down the cliff from the hotel. It must have been about four o'clock in the morning. I found this white man,—his real name is Robert Oddman Trevor,—tinkering with an aeroplane and I asked him to take me with him and he did." She dropped her eyes. "Now he's agreed to marry me."

Trevor turned white-lipped from the door where he had been giving an order to Bathtub. "Andrea," he said, his eyes blazing with anger, "you will please

keep out of this conversation until you are called upon for a few responses." He turned to the Bishop. "Please overlook Miss Pellor's flippancy," he continued. "There is only one reason why I should marry her and she me and that is that we love each other beyond the power of words to express."

"But, my dear man," said the Bishop. "I know who Lady Andrea is, only too well; the question is who on earth are you? I take it I'm not wrong in thinking that you have got me here with the idea of persuading me to perform a ceremony which will shower me with lime-light for the next six months."

"Nine days is the accepted limit," murmured Andrea and added hastily, "I was just speaking to myself."

Trevor ignored her. "Your question," he said to the Bishop, "is a natural one." He went to the high desk, took certain papers and, flushing slightly, handed them to the Bishop who glanced over them with undisguised interest.

"So," he said finally, "you are a retired officer of the Royal Flying Corps, a D. S. O. and you also hold the *croix de guerre!*" He tapped a devil's tattoo on the arm of his chair and gradually the

furrow on his brow cleared and he smiled. "Unexceptional credentials; but as I am in peril of becoming a very much interested third party, I can not refrain from asking if you are in a position to render such financial comfort to this young lady and to her family as I believe it has reason to expect from her original betrothed."

"I am not buying Andrea," said Trevor quickly. "Millions for herself if she needs them; not a cent of tribute for the family. Not to waste your time further," he continued, "I wish to say that I consider you entitled to the thousand pounds' reward offered for her discovery alive and am prepared to hand you the sum in gold at once. If you have any scruples as to taking it personally, there is surely no reason why you should not accept it for your Mission. In return you will marry us immediately by the rites of your Church, which you doubtless know will be accepted as legally binding in my own country."

"If I refuse?" asked the Bishop as he extended his hand toward Bathtub, entering in the rôle of Ganymede.

"If you refuse," said Trevor grimly, "you and

your companions will be detained, forcibly if necessary, as witnesses to a ceremony performed in accordance with native custom."

"What!" exclaimed the Bishop, aghast.

"This isn't an argument," said Trevor dryly; "it's a proposition, quite fair and above-board. You take it or leave it,—inside of five minutes."

The Bishop turned to Andrea. "Would you—would *you*—," he stammered and stopped.

"I am quite indifferent as to method," said Andrea quietly. "No ceremony can add to the pledge that I have made in my heart. He has my love. He can have my body and soul for the asking."

The bishop was silent for a moment, his eyes fixed on the sudden glow that illuminated Trevor's face; then he said, "Well, my dear, that settles it,—settles it so finally, in fact, that I can't help but perceive that you are both equally in haste to repent at leisure."

He arose with a resigned sigh. "Five minutes are soon up," he said to Trevor. "Will you agree to take time out while I talk to my associates?"

"Most certainly," answered Trevor gravely and opened the door for his lordship.

In ten minutes the associates were persuaded; in half an hour, with the assistance of the diamond magnate's engagement ring, Andrea and Trevor were made man and wife according to the ancient usage of the Church of England; and just five minutes after that, Bathtub announced dinner. It was high time, for in spite of the toast that she had had with her tea, Andrea was faint and pale with hunger. Nothing short of the stimulus in the excitement of being married for the very first time in her life could have saved her from collapse.

That was a great and merry dinner. The toasts that were drunk to the bride were many, some hearty, some witty; but the one that stood out above all others was that in which she pledged herself. She stood, glass in hand, and looked down at the kindly, encouraging faces of the four men.

"This is the swan-song of the Honorable Andrea Pellor," she said in a voice that started a bit gaspingly but soon steadied to a clear flow, "who worshipped false gods flippantly during twenty-five years of her life, who traveled blindfolded through a beautiful world to the feet of a Calf of Gold and mercifully died on a certain beach at four o'clock

of a morning. She drinks with you to Andrea Robert Oddman Trevor, the happiest woman—the happiest wo— the—"

Trevor leaped to his feet, put his arm around her and patted her on the shoulder. "There, there!" he soothed desperately, his face flushed with embarrassment.

"Kiss her, you duffer!" roared the three divines in one voice.

CHAPTER XXV

THEY were all early to bed, the word having gone out to break camp at dawn for safari. The Bishop and his companions were northward bound, Andrea and her man, headed for the South and the coast. In the cold mist of the morning they parted with tight handclasps and earnestly murmured "God-bless-you's."

"You won't forget to write us about it?"

"——— to send us the press-clippings?"

"——— to tell us how his face looked?"

And then, "Good-by," and "Good-by" and "Good-by" in diminuendo as paths diverged.

A book might be written on the wonders of that honeymoon. The life of the trail, new to Andrea, to Trevor eternally fresh as are the clear waters of a cold pure spring to the parched throat of man, unfolded day by day its tale of elemental conquest,—but their hearts, still faced to a goal, were in too great a haste to lend their emotions to descriptive narrative. Suffice it to say that there were occasions by the dozen for Andrea to confirm her opin-

jon that she had caught a full-grown man. Trevor, in action, had ever been to her a thing of joy, but now to vicarious pleasure was added the sugar of participation, of possession shared. Her pride in him was constantly fed until it threatened to ruin her moral figure.

Incidents, following rapidly one after the other, kept her mind off the coming encounter with her old world until she was actually on its verge. Late one afternoon they came upon the bay and Trevor waited expectantly for her to recognize the scene of her ravishment. He was disappointed, for the thin insignificant strip of yellow sand tucked under the red cliff diminished by distance to the proportion of a railway embankment, meant nothing to her inexperienced eyes.

At last he pointed it out to her. "Behold," he said, "the beginning and the end of all things."

"Why," exclaimed Andrea. "Is it really the beach,—our beach? How it's shrunk!"

"It has," said Trevor solemnly. "The erosion on this bit of coast is a foot for every hundred years. We'd better hurry if we want to make a landing."

He chartered two sailing boats from a Greek fisherman and in an hour the beach had broadened, the cliff had risen to almost imposing heights; while they were still well off the shore they shot into its shadow. The boatman chose a landing at the foot of the Cliff Road, a quarter of a mile away from the steep path by which Andrea had made her descent. As the safari began to form on the beach Trevor turned to Andrea. "We're going to your old hotel, you know. It's really the only one. If you prefer, I can send for a motor-car for you and myself; but we'd have to wait half an hour."

Andrea caught her breath as she realized that it was only minutes before she would be in collision with a world. Her eyes ran down the line of their marching column already on the edge of an incongruous setting, but still impressing with that subtle dignity which the free and half-naked black takes with him everywhere and which is born of his absolute indifference to standards not his own.

"Let us go in at the head of our men," she answered.

"You are right," said Trevor, pleased at her shrewd judgment. "We mortals," he added, "don't

always recognize the importance of fighting an atmosphere with an atmosphere. To go in as cock of our own walk is a thousand times better than a motor-car and the back door."

Andrea nodded. "I felt it but I couldn't put it in words like that."

The cortège that approached the entrance to the Indian Ocean Hotel at an hour when men, having ceased from labor, are sipping cocktails and smoking one more cigarette before going up to dress and when knitting women are trying to purl out before daylight goes, was almost biblical in its imposing simplicity. First came Trevor, browned by many suns and virile, his khaki clothes molded by usage to the long rippling muscles of his body; just behind him followed Marguerite carrying philosophically as precious a burden of blushing youth and loveliness as ever God packed into one skin. Then came gunbearers, water-carriers, askaris and personal servants, including Bathtub at the head of the picked carriers who bore everything necessary to the setting of camp.

After that followed a break occupied only by the cook, a solemn personage who marched ever alone

dressed in one of Trevor's cast-off suits of mufti and carrying, slung on a stick over his shoulder, a pair of shoes which had accompanied the gift of raiment but into which his feet had never been able to force a way. Behind him followed a long string of porters, herded by three vociferous captains armed each with a pointed stick which they talked about often but never used and carrying the endless assortment of loads that speak with an indescribable eloquence for the self-sufficiency of a well-appointed safari.

These loads were in themselves a story; battered tin cases, a trunk, and many packs; chuck boxes, scarred by the burns and bruises of many a campfire and many a journey; trophies in the sum of eight elephant tusks and three noble heads, one of koodoo, one of sable and one,—the staggering weight of a great bull-buffalo's skull, mask and horns,—hung on a pole between two men.

Followed the rag-tag of lighter and miscellaneous burdens; such as the precious camp acetylene lamps, carried each by a boy, the filter, a bucket full of dishes, a cluster of common lanterns, a demijohn of drinking water. Bringing up the tailing rear

were the camp-followers, a few youngsters and half a dozen favored wives, too comely to be trusted at home. These carried for their fathers and lords, tit-bits of meat in varying stages of putrefaction, also much mandioc and such other vegetables as they had been able to beg or steal along the line of march.

As Trevor, the white head of this quarter-mile-long and glistening black serpent of humanity, swung in between the gateposts of the hotel's imposing portals, the ever-opportune Marguerite stretched his neck, raised his barrel-head and brayed. Above that raucous cry sounded the spontaneous and uncontrollable peal of Andrea's silver laughter.

The groups of men and women,—all but one,—on the hotel veranda stopped in their various occupations as though paralyzed; drinks paused halfway to thirsty lips, cigarettes burned unconscious fingers, knitting needles poised instantaneously,—all but one pair. The manipulator of the exception was a dear but very proper old lady wearing a cap of filmy lace on her plentiful white hair and enough more lace on her person to make the porch chair in which she sat look like a stall at a Red Cross bazaar. She was knitting a vast khaki-colored

sweater and at the sound of Andrea's laughter she gave no sign beyond pursing her withered lips while she methodically finished off the stitch upon which she had been engaged.

That done, she raised a pair of beady black eyes so wonderfully alive that it seemed impossible they belonged to her wrinkled face and flashed one look at Andrea and one at Trevor. "Well, my dear," she said calmly, presumably to the former, "it's a relief to have you back apparently alive and well."

No sooner were the words out of her mouth than she was swept into Andrea's impetuous embrace. "Oh, Aunty Gwen! Oh, you old dear!"

The lady defended herself with considerable energy and was heard to grumble that even kissing had degenerated into a rough pastime. Having rescued herself from Andrea's arms, she said, "Now that that is over you will please go to your room and change from that outlandish circus costume; you'll find everything as you left it except for a new lock on the door."

Andrea glanced at Trevor and leaned over to whisper imploringly in her aunt's ear.

"Your husband?" enunciated the old lady clearly.

"Well, that's a relief, too; but I prefer to meet him elsewhere and after you have presented documentary evidence. By the way," she added with ominous emphasis as she resumed her knitting, "Harry is still here."

"I should say I am," exclaimed a youth in the trim uniform of the Flying Corps as he stepped out from the hotel door. "Hello, Sister Andy." Then his eyes fell on Trevor. A slow smile of happy welcome spread over his face. "Well, I'll be damned!" he exclaimed fervently. "D' you know, Trevor, I've been saying from the first, *'Cherchez* the flying-machine.' Come in and let me watch you have a drink."

Trevor, quivering under the pressure of the control he had summoned to carry him through the trying moment and filled with an immediate love and admiration for Aunty Gwen, paused to direct his following to a near-by vacant lot.

Harry took the chance for swift appraisal. "Ye Gods, man! what trophies!" he murmured. "Hours of talk in each one of 'em," he added wistfully, "and my special leave is up to-morrow!"

"It's the kind of talk that will keep as long as

memory lasts, old man," comforted Trevor as he led his brother-in-law through the shadowy hall and turned instinctively to the left.

"Is that marriage tip straight?" asked Harry.

"Straight as the good Bishop of Moma and two other missionary Johnnies could make it," replied Trevor.

Harry was thoughtful for a moment, then he said, "Well, Trevor, I don't know how you're fixed for proof but I want you to know that through lean years and fat, I'm for you from the break in balk. As one sportsman to another, I congratulate you on putting one over on that up-country animated leather-sack of vintage wines. By the way, you realize I've got to wire him."

"Of course," said Trevor. "The sooner the better. Don't worry about Andrea's food and raiment," he added flushing. "The truth is, I'm pretty well heeled with the needful."

"You Americans generally are," said Harry admiringly. "Sort of jolly national tradition."

Twenty-four hours later the diamond magnate, perennially flushed as to face and heavy of paunch, made his impressive arrival. He advanced on the

hotel office and stated laconically, "I wired for my usual suite."

The proprietor himself delivered the first blow of the battle wherein pride was to take a fall. "Sorry, Sir Hammar," he said briskly, "that suite was taken before your wire arrived by Mr. and Mrs. Trevor. We've done the next best thing. Shall I show you up?"

The magnate's small eyes gleamed wickedly. "Yes," he said with a pause. "Go ahead with your showing me up."

When he had washed and otherwise attempted to freshen his perspiring person he sent out a call for a family conference. It took place in the Trevors' sitting-room. Harry was there, and Aunty Gwen knitting; also Trevor and his bride. The sole male representative present of the house of Pellor opened the proceedings with the following speech: "Hammar," he said, "on the part of my sister I wish to offer you an unqualified apology. It seems that she was—er—suddenly carried away by an impulse in conjunction with a flying-machine, but you will be glad to know that Trevor here has—er—has played the man all through and you are permanently re-

lieved from any further responsibility in the matter. I don't think there's another bally thing to say beyond repeating the apology due you from my entire family."

"Not a thing to say, you young sycophant of a whipper-snapper!" thundered the red-faced magnate. "Do you think I came down here to listen to your maiden speech, accept a dirty apology and get out with my tail between my legs? Well, I didn't, I came down here to show this interloping vagabond of a scavenger where he and his—wife—don't get off."

A gleam crept into Trevor's eyes, the same gleam that had shone there when he had shot MacCloster, but it turned into his slow assuring smile as his gaze met that of Andrea and took note of her alarm. He remembered that only ten minutes before he had promised on the honor of a lover to be seen only and not heard.

"Aren't you a bit late for that?" asked Harry, unperturbed. "They seem to be running before the wind already and with a fair lead." He lit a cigarette and snapped the dead match through the open doorway.

"You think so, do you?" said the magnate, his eyes snapping malignantly. "You've probably never heard of the shipping ring but I'll tell you this,—the line that takes these two—two—two whatchu-may-callums as passengers is ruined. They'll stay in Africa till they rot."

Andrea stifled a yawn. "Robert," she said in her coolest and best society voice, "if Sir Hammar is going to force us to wait here for one of your own steamers to put in, I think you'd better collect that thousand pounds reward."

It was the end. The magnate gasped, sprang up and fled, pursued by a smoke arrow propelled from Harry's rounded mouth. Aunty Gwen pursed her lips but kept on knitting; she could not, however, altogether hide the laugh that was in her snapping eyes. Andrea arose and dropped on her knees beside her ancient relative.

"Oh, Aunty Gwen," she begged, "won't you please let me introduce Robert? He's the dearest, most thoughtful, strongest and weakest man that a lucky girl ever loved."

Aunty Gwen dropped her knitting and took Andrea's face in her hands. "Why, my dear," she

She felt a welling within her of all the major emotions

said, her black eyes brimming over with kindly mischief, "of course you can introduce him. I've just been putting it off because I was longing to kiss him, a perfectly strange young man, and I hated to have it over with."

That night when all the hotel was in darkness and silence reigned Andrea and Trevor stood together by the coping at the edge of the cliff and looked across the moonlit bay to the far-away line of the sea. Behind them was the dark, massed shadow of the Bougainvillea trellis; at their feet and before them stretched an open world, bathed in kindly and opalescent light.

Andrea's eyes started at the top of the zigzag path and followed it deliberately down the cliff-side until they reached and swept the gleaming crescent of the beach; then they rose and stared at the placid moon. Nine weeks, no more, had passed since last this scene had held her, yet into them was packed the germ of all her life almost to the exclusion of preceding memories. She felt a welling within her of all the major emotions and frightened, turned from them to hide her face against Trevor's shoulder.

Her arms slipped up around his neck and clung to him.

"Oh, White Man," she whispered, "my Wonder Man, plunderer of my heart, if desire to give is any measure, how far you have led me along the shining road!"

THE END